PROJECT MUSE®

The Evolution of the Syrian Orthodox Church in the Pre-Islamic Period: From Greek to Syriac?

Fergus Millar

Journal of Early Christian Studies, Volume 21, Number 1, Spring 2013, pp. 43-92 (Article)

Published by The Johns Hopkins University Press
DOI: 10.1353/earl.2013.0002

For additional information about this article
http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/earl/summary/v021/21.1.millar.html

Access provided by The University of Lethbridge Library (12 Nov 2015 20:27 GMT)

The Evolution of the Syrian Orthodox Church in the Pre-Islamic Period: From Greek to Syriac?

FERGUS MILLAR

This essay first sketches some issues of ethnic or religious identity and their possible relevance to the late Roman Near East, and then surveys the various labels attached by contemporaries to those within the Church who opposed the doctrines proclaimed at the Council of Chalcedon, and proclaimed instead a one-nature Christology. Its main purpose is to examine the very extensive and detailed contemporary evidence from the pre-Islamic period for the evolving role of Syriac in what would later become the Syrian Orthodox Church.

To-day religion, or at any rate doctrine, is not with the majority of people a dominant issue and does not arouse major passions. Nationalism and socialism are, on the other hand, powerful forces, which can and do provoke the most intense feelings.

A. H. M. Jones

INTRODUCTION

This observation, by the greatest modern historian of late antiquity, was made in 1959 in the course of his much-cited article directed to disproving the presumption that Christian heresies might have been "national or

I am very grateful to Averil Cameron, Alison Salvesen, and the two reviewers for *JECS* for their much-needed corrections and comments, and to the Editor for his constructive support. This is the place also to acknowledge my great debt to David Taylor for his instruction in Syriac over the last few years.

Journal of Early Christian Studies 21:1, 43–92 © 2013 The Johns Hopkins University Press

social movements in disguise."[1] Jones was responding primarily to a bold and sweeping monograph, or essay, on "Christianity and Nationalism" written by a young English officer while on leave in 1916, who would himself later be a major modern historian.[2] Half a century later, such a remark as Jones's could not be made, even by the most secular-minded of rational, left-leaning intellectuals. Socialism, as an ideal, is all but forgotten; religious, communal, and linguistic divisions play an ever more dominant role.

As they stand, Jones's arguments are incontrovertible, and are so also in relation to the subject of this paper, namely "the monophysite movement," to use the term employed by W. H. C. Frend.[3] We will return below to the question of identity, or identification—that is, what terms were used by contemporaries, either insiders or outsiders, to designate those who belonged to what would later be the "Syrian Orthodox Church." It can be said in advance of the detailed discussion that the solution adopted will be to employ the term that they used for themselves, "the orthodox," but retaining the quotation marks so as to indicate that this claim was controversial. What we are concerned with was not in origin an ethnic or linguistic movement, but a profound doctrinal, or Christological, division, formulated by theologians and bishops writing in Greek, and stimulated above all by the fateful use of the term "in two natures" which was included in the Definition of Faith adopted (under imperial pressure) at the Council of Chalcedon of 451 C.E. As regards the notion of a "social movement," there is nothing to suggest that ideas about a reform of society played any part in the resistance to Chalcedon over the next century and a half. Nor is there good reason to suppose that any form of political or secular nationalism, even if "in disguise," lay behind this movement. It is true, however, and must be in some degree relevant, that, apart from the Syrian region, it was in areas which showed a distinctive ethnic and linguistic character that "orthodox" (or "monophysite") churches took root—in Egypt, from within the empire; in Armenia, on its border; and

1. A. H. M. Jones, "Were Ancient Heresies National or Social Movements in Disguise?," *JTS* n.s. 10 (1959): 280–98, repr. in Jones, *The Roman Economy*, ed. P. A. Brunt (Oxford: Blackwell. 1974), 308–29.

2. E. L. Woodward, *Christianity and Nationalism in the Later Roman Empire* (London: Longmans, Green, 1916).

3. W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement: Chapters in the History of the Church in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1972). My immense debt to this work, as to V. L. Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), should be acknowledged here, since I do not return to them in discussing individual points.

in Ethiopia, which, while in active religious and cultural contact with Constantinople and Alexandria, was always politically independent. Was "orthodoxy," as it found collective expression in the area where Syriac was spoken alongside Greek, also the product of a distinctive regional identity?

As for those who were described, by themselves and others, as *Suroi* or ܣܘܪܝܐ, it is in no way an inappropriate question to ask if they represented an *ethnos* that might have been capable of a "nationalist" movement, or even actual rebellion. Such a thing could happen. Even if the two successive independent Jewish states which had existed for a few years each, in rebellion against Rome, in the first and second centuries should be seen as too remote to serve as possible models, the major Samaritan revolts of 484 and 529 C.E. showed that an ethnically-based rising was possible; in the case of that of 529 it was even suspected that there had been connections with Sasanid Persia.[4] Even more clearly, the Isaurians represented a permanently semi-independent "nation" within the empire, capable of conducting wide-ranging raids across the eastern provinces.[5]

But the *Suroi* were not such an *ethnos*; and it is, as it seems, only Theodoret, in a letter of about 451 C.E., who describes them as such, calling Ephrem "the lyre of the spirit, daily refreshing the *ethnos* of the *Suroi* with the waters of grace."[6] While it seems clear that the designation *Suros* applies essentially to language, we cannot determine any clear divisions of either locality or social class as between them and "Hellenes"—and in any case the evidence shows beyond doubt that there was extensive personal bilingualism,[7] as well as regular translation of texts, if much more often from Greek into Syriac than the other way round.[8]

4. So Theophanes, *Chronographia*, a.m. 6021, 178–79. See C. Mango, R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284–813* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 271.

5. See H. Elton, "The Nature of the Sixth-Century Isaurians," in *Ethnicity and Culture in Late Antiquity*, eds. S. Mitchell and G. Greatrex (Swansea: Duckworth and University Press of Wales, 2000), 293–307.

6. Y. Azéma (ed.), *Théodoret de Cyr, Correspondance,* vol. 3 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1965), no. 146. For the context see F. Millar, "Community, Religion and Language in the Middle-Euphrates Zone in Late Antiquity," *Scripta Classica Israelica* 27 (2008): 68–95, on 86–90.

7. See the classic studies of S. Brock, "Greek and Syriac in Late Antique Syria," in *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World*, eds. A. K. Bowman and G. Woolf (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 149–60, and D. Taylor, "Bilingualism and Diglossia in Late Antique Syria and Mesopotamia," in *Bilingualism in Ancient Society: Language Contact and the Written Word*, eds. J. N. Adams, M. Janse, and S. Swain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 298–331.

8. Note the essays by Sebastian Brock, collected in his *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity* (London: Variorum, 1984), nos. 3–5.

There was thus no basis for an actual Syrian, or Syriac, "nationalism," whether in the form of carving out a distinctive territory within either the early Byzantine empire or the Sasanid one—or still less of attempting to create a "Suristan" stretching from Roman Syria, Euphratensis, Osrhoene, and Mesopotamia into Sasanid Mesopotamia and down to Seleucia/Ctesiphon. Any such project would have encountered, at any rate after the Councils of Ephesus I of 431 C.E. and of Chalcedon, the problem of a profound Christological, or ecclesiastical, division. For the vast majority of the Syriac-speaking Christians of the Sasanid empire belonged to a church headed by the bishop of Seleucia, which, as detailed documentary evidence shows, met in its own councils from 410 C.E. onwards, and which remained attached to the Christological doctrines of Theodore of Mopsuestia, which Nestorius followed, and which led to his deposition at Ephesus in 431 C.E. and subsequent exile, and to the banning of his works by Theodosius I. This was what was to become "the Church of the East," which it is misleading on the part of moderns to label "Nestorian"—but whose members were nonetheless regularly called "Nestorians" by their contemporary opponents.[9] The religious life of any independent "Suristan" would thus have been marked by profound divisions along doctrinal or Christological lines. Weaker forms of such conflicts are clearly attested as occurring within the Sasanid empire of the early sixth century, as is shown above all in the brilliant sketch of the activities of Simeon of Beth Arsham, "the Persian debater," offered by the tenth of John of Ephesus's *Lives of the Eastern Saints*.[10] Simeon's opponents, who were the majority element among the Christians of the Sasanid Empire, belonged, as John describes them, to "the house of Nestorius."

The wider historical context is thus not that any political, separatist, or "nationalist" movement emerged among the *Suroi*, but exactly the opposite, namely that it was political and doctrinal developments at the heart of the early Byzantine Empire which determined that ultimately there would be two different, and doctrinally-opposed, Syriac-using churches, of which one was established in the pagan Iranian empire of the Sasanids, while followers of the same Christology within Roman territories were either suppressed or driven out across the Roman-Sasanid border. The other, "orthodox" or "monophysite," was represented in both empires,

9. The fundamental text is J.-B. Chabot, *Synodicon Orientale* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1902). For a brief modern account see W. Baum and D. Winkler, *The Church of the East: a Concise History* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003).

10. Ed. and trans. E. W. Brooks, PO 17.1:137–58. This work is discussed more fully below.

while they lasted, but in both areas was a minority. The Islamic conquests of the mid-seventh century brought both of these churches within a quite new imperial regime, founded on Biblical monotheism, using Arabic as its official language and its language of culture, and denying the divinity of Christ. Up to that moment, it is clear, the main part of the future Syrian Orthodox Church, that established within Roman territory, faced different doctrinal opponents, namely the majority "Chalcedonians" who followed the Definition of Faith of 451 C.E.—and who could themselves also be called, abusively, by their opponents "Nestorian," in spite of subscribing firmly to the anathema on him pronounced at Ephesus. By the earlier seventh century, this church had taken only limited steps to elect its own bishops (whose sees were not in fact restricted to the Syriac-speaking zone), and in its language-use manifested a highly complex combination, or alternation, of Greek and Syriac. In the following centuries, however, we can see the evolution of a clearly-defined Syriac literary and historical tradition within the Syrian Orthodox Church, as summed up most fully in the work of Michael the Syrian, Patriarch of Antioch in 1166 to 1199 C.E.

But if, as is clear, "nationalism" as such is not at issue, in the sense of an independence movement, it is relevant that an extensive modern literature on nationalism, identity and ethnicities, and on the question of whether emerging nations characteristically invent a communal, ethnic, or sectarian tradition for themselves, or may in fact arise from already-existing linguistic, ethnic, or religious communities, has evolved since Jones wrote. We may think of the names of Ernest Gellner,[11] Benedict Anderson,[12] and perhaps above all of Anthony Smith. Among his many contributions, we may note his study of the role of ethnicity in the emergence of nations, and nation-states.[13] The evolution of this field of study is surveyed in masterly style in his Menahem Stern Jerusalem Lectures of 1999, published in the following year.[14]

These studies, with their focus on shared culture, religious beliefs, language, and communal tradition, as possible elements inspiring nationalist aspirations (whether fulfilled or not), are of obvious relevance to the history of the Syrian Orthodox Church, even if nationhood, in the sense of the claim to an independent state, was never sought, or still less achieved.

11. E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

12. B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Editions and New Left Books, 1991).

13. A. D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

14. A. D. Smith, *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000).

So it was entirely appropriate that the literature of the subject should have been reviewed recently by Bas ter Haar Romeny in discussing the nature and significance of communal identities derived from religious belief—and precisely as they can be seen in the case of the Christian communities of the Near East.[15] From the very significant volume which he edited, we may pick out some contributions which are particularly relevant for this paper, beginning with parallel cases: G. J. Reinink on "Nestorian" identity in sixth- and seventh-century Iraq (217–50); T. M. van Lint on the formation of Armenian identity (251–78); and J. van der Vliet on the Copts and Egyptian traditions (279–90). This latter paper will serve to remind us that problems that are comparable, but certainly not identical, to those that relate to the Syriac-speaking area, arise in the case of late antique Egypt. Can we equate "Greek" with "Chalcedonian," and "Coptic" with "monophysite"? I owe to Arietta Papaconstantinou the observation that this very general assumption has been vigorously challenged in recent years, especially by Ewa Wipszycka.[16] It is clear, that with Greek and Coptic, as with Greek and Syriac, much remains to be clarified as regards the relations of the two languages, let alone their relevance to religious divisions. Bilingualism was certainly common, and the use of one language or another might depend on the context.[17] So, in the case of Greek and Syriac also, there may be a case for avoiding over-confident generalizations, and examining language-use as attested in specific areas at specific times.[18]

Returning to the Syrian area as represented in *The Christian Communities of the Near East*, we find an important chapter by David Taylor on the *Psalm Commentary* by Daniel of Salah (65–92), to be discussed below;

15. B. ter Haar Romeny (ed.), *Religious Origins of Nations? The Christian Communities of the Near East*, special issue of *Church History and Religious Culture* 89.1–3 (2009), viii–xvii and 1–366.

16. E. Wipszycka, "Le nationalisme a-t-il existé en Égypte byzantine?," *Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 22 (1992): 83–128, repr. in her *Études sur le christianisme dans l'Égypte de l'antiquité tardive* (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1996), 9–61.

17. Note esp. A. Papaconstantinou, "Dioscore et la question du bilinguisme dans l'Égypte du VIe siècle," in *Les archives de Dioscore d'Aphrodité cent ans après leur découverte: histoire et culture dans l'Égypte byzantine*, ed. J.-L. Fournet (Paris: De Boccard, 2008), 77–88.

18. For attempts to put this idea into practice see F. Millar, "Greek and Syriac in Edessa and Osrhoene, C.E. 213–363," *Scripta Classica Israelica* 30 (2011): 93–111; "Greek and Syriac in Edessa from Ephrem to Rabbula (C.E. 363–435)," *Semitica et Classica* 4 (2011): 99–113; "Greek and Syriac in Fifth-century Edessa: The Case of the Bishop Hibas," *Semitica et Classica* 5 (2012): 99–113.

and two contributions which focus on Syriac historiography and identity, above all in the medieval period: M. Debié, "Syriac Historiography and Identity Formation" (93–114), and D. Weltecke, "Michael the Syrian and Syriac Orthodox Identity" (115–26), which are both extremely suggestive as regards the wider issues raised in discussions of nationalism, or incipient nationalism, as reflected in the history of the Syriac-speaking "orthodox." But this invaluable volume was not intended as a compendium, and it does leave space for an examination of the early period, from the aftermath of Chalcedon to the eve of the Islamic conquests.[19] A number of different questions arise. At what point (if any) within this period can we properly talk of a separate church (whether we label it "Syrian Orthodox" or not)? How were the members of this incipient church identified, or described, either by themselves or by outsiders? How do we evaluate their use of Syriac alongside Greek? The treatment will be restricted to the zone where spoken Syriac was current, and will not return to the evolution of "orthodox" churches elsewhere (in Armenia, Egypt, or Ethiopia) which followed the same Christology, nor to the history of the "orthodox" in the Sasanid empire, in which Greek did not play the role of an established dominant language. The area primarily concerned comprises the Roman provinces of Mesopotamia, Osrhoene, Euphratensis, Syria I and II, and, by extension, at least as regards religious discourse conducted in monasteries, the provinces of Phoenicia Libanensis and Arabia. Contemporaries always described the Semitic language which was in use in all these areas as "the Syrian language" or the "Syrian dialect," thus not confining their conceptions to the area which the Roman state called "Syria," and making no distinction between different Aramaic dialects. Indeed they also used the same term for the Aramaic of Palestine and neighboring areas; but the linguistic history of this region was in fact different, and will not be considered further in this paper.

The developing role of Syriac came about (paradoxically) by the adoption of the dialect and script, not of Syria itself, but of Osrhoene and Mesopotamia, as a language of Christian thought and writing alongside Greek. But was it the case that followers of the "one-nature" Christology that was the theological foundation of the later "Syrian Orthodox Church" were identified in the pre-Islamic period, by themselves or by others, as "Syrian"? And irrespective of that, was it the case that writing in Syriac played a significant, and distinctive, role in this religious community?

19. For a wide-ranging and suggestive study of related themes see now also Philip Wood, *"We have no King but Christ": Christian Political Thought in Greater Syria on the Eve of the Arab Conquest (c.400–585)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Before we look at the evidence for language-use, however, it will be necessary to pose some controversial, and in truth irresolvable, questions. Firstly, what terms were used by contemporaries, either within this group, or incipient "church," or outside it? Secondly, should we, in referring to it, restrict our terminology to that derived from the usage of contemporaries? But, if so, we will find that almost all cases of such terminology represent pejorative forms of identification as used by outsiders. Is it therefore acceptable for us to use one or other example of this hostile vocabulary? Alternatively, is it legitimate to retroject terms like "the Syrian Orthodox Church" which were not used by contemporaries, whether insiders or outsiders?

NAMING AND IDENTITY

It is a feature of early Christian history that large numbers of different Christian sects are identified in our sources as heresies, and are given names, very often derived from the personal name of their alleged founders. Very few of these names, however, are ever attested as being used by the members of the relevant sects themselves: one striking exception is the "synagogue of Marcionites" attested on an inscription from south of Damascus in the 320s C.E.[20] Another example is provided by inscriptions from Anatolia in which members of the relevant sects describe themselves as "Katharoi" or "Novatians."[21] In general, however, modern scholars find themselves in a quandary: either to identify the sect that they are talking about by a designation which was always, or nearly always, used only by their opponents; or to be at a loss to know what term to use.

In the case of the divisions which marked the period after Chalcedon, the modern scholar is faced with a further complication, namely that mutual rhetoric led to the use for the opposed sect of terms which deliberately associated them with the holders of more extreme positions that those which they themselves consciously adopted. Hence, the proponents of Chalcedon were frequently characterized as "Nestorians" (just like the members of the future "Church of the East," from whose views they dis-

20. W. Dittenberger, *Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1895), no. 608: Συναγωγὴ Μαρκιωνιστῶν.

21. See the remarkable study of these inscriptions by S. Mitchell, *Anatolia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 2:100–108, and compare F. Millar, "Repentant Heretics in Fifth-century Lydia: Identity and Literacy," *Scripta Classica Israelica* (2004): 111–30, and P. Thonemann, "Amphilochius of Iconium and Lycaonian Asceticism," *JRS* 101 (2011): 185–205.

sociated themselves). On the other side, as we will see below, the Chalcedonians could refer to their opponents by a variety of pejorative terms, not excluding "Eutychianists," although these opponents themselves did not call in question the anathema passed on Eutyches at Chalcedon. On occasion, it may be, the various forms of pejorative naming reflect real internal divisions. But in general they should be read as rhetoric. Discussion will start with terms that are attested as in use (if very rarely in some cases) in the period, but by opponents. As will be seen, much of this vocabulary is doctrinal, or ecclesiastical, in orientation, with no implications as to the ethnic character or locality of the group referred to. But it is important to stress that implicit or explicit allusions to a specifically "Syrian" identity or locality do in fact slowly emerge.

(a) Monophysite

It is a typical paradox that this term has been in regular use in modern scholarship, including in the best historical study, that of W. H. C. Frend;[22] but it was not used by the "monophysites" themselves. According to an authoritative entry in a major theological encyclopedia, this label is not in any case attested until it was used quite frequently by a hostile writer of the second half of the seventh century, Anastasius the Sinaite.[23] This is not strictly correct, however, for there is (at least) one usage from the first half of the sixth century, and one which illustrates vividly how the term exemplifies a vocabulary of mutual conflict which is still in the process of formation. This is found in the polemical work of Leontius of Jerusalem, the *Testimonies of the Saints*, which was composed, as argued by P. T. R. Gray, in the years 536–38 C.E.[24] Leontius uses two closely-related terms, both intended negatively. At *PG* 86, col. 1849A (Gray, 102) he speaks of Timothy Aelurus as "the heretic and monophysite" (Τιμοθέου τοῦ Αἰλούρου τοῦ αἱρετικοῦ καὶ μονοφυσίτου). But earlier (*PG* 85:1841B; Gray, 94), he had spoken of Severus of Antioch as "the heretic, the nature-mixer" (Σεβήρου τοῦ αἱρετικοῦ τοῦ μιξοφυσίτου).

"Monophysite" can thus be claimed to have some (if minimal) contemporary attestation, and then to have become, by the first century of Islamic rule, an established name for a heretical sect, or, by now, a separatist Church. But if it is to be used in scholarship it is only out of deference to established habit, for it was not in current use in the pre-Islamic period.

22. Frend, n. 3 above.

23. P. Allen, "Monophysiten," *Theologische Realenkyklopädie* 23 (1994), 219–37.

24. P. T. R. Gray, *Leontius of Jerusalem, Against the Monophysites: Testimonies of the Saints and Aporiae* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); for the date, see 36–40.

(b) Miaphysite

Since the publication of an influential article by D. Winkler in 1997, the term "miaphysite" has gained a remarkable currency among scholars who feel uncomfortable with "monophysite."[25] It has the air of a technical term, of course derived from the Greek μία φύσις ("one nature"). But there is a profound problem. This term is a neologism invented by a modern scholar. It is not only that there is no evidence for the contemporary use of "miaphysite" in our sources, either in Greek or in Syriac transliteration. It is also that, as my colleague in Classical Philology and Linguistics, Philomen Probert, kindly confirms, no compound nouns formed from μία + feminine noun + ending are found in either Classical or Patristic Greek. We cannot declare any such usage to be an impossibility, but it would quite clearly be a linguistic anomaly. Of course we may use whatever term we choose; but we should not delude ourselves that this one has any historical or philological justification. The air of authenticity and precision that it has somehow acquired is deceptive, and it would be better if it were not used.

(c) Akephaloi ("Headless Ones") or Aposchistai ("Dissidents" or "Separatists")

Akephaloi is a clear example of how a term arising from a division on the "orthodox" side in the fifth century came to be used by opponents in the sixth century as a polemical way of referring to all adherents of a "one-nature" Christology. According to a Chalcedonian treatise formerly attributed to Leontius of Byzantium, the term was first used of those who separated themselves from Peter Mongus, as bishop of Alexandria, because he accepted Zeno's *Henoticon* of 482 C.E.[26] But already in the *Life of Severus* by Zachariah of Mitylene, originally written in Greek soon after 512 C.E., we find it transliterated in the later Syriac translation, and explicitly characterized as a misleading description used by those (the Chalcedonians) who had separated themselves from the "holy catholic Church of God" (ܥܕܬܐ ܩܕܝܫܬܐ ܟܬܘܠܝܩܝܬܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ)—"and for that reason they gave their opponents deceitfully the name *akephaloi*" (ܐܟܐܦܠܘܣ ܗܘ ܕܥܠ ܗܢܐ ܣܒܒܐ ܠܚܫܐ ܩܪܘ ܠܒܥܠܝ ܕܒܪܝܫ ܠܗܘܢ ܠܡܚܠܦܝܗܘܢ ܒܫܡ ܐܟܐܦܠܘܣ.).[27] This wider sense of "headlessness" was to prevail in the polemical vocabulary of the sixth century, and was to be deployed repeatedly by Justinian

25. D. W. Winkler, "Miaphysitism: A New Term for Use in the History of Dogma and in Ecumenical Theology," *The Harp* 10.3 (1997): 33–40.

26. [Leontius,] *De sectis* 5.2 (PG 86:1229B).

27. M. A. Kugener, ed. and trans., *Vie de Sévère*, PO 2, on 107.

himself, for instance in his *Letter to the Monks of Alexandria* of 542/3 C.E.[28] In the middle of the century it is also used frequently by Facundus of Hermiane in his *Defence of the Three Chapters*; at one point he refers to those called *Acephali* by the *Graeci* "whom we can more meaningfully call *Semieutychiani*."[29]

The term *Aposchistai* ("dissidents" or "separatists") also appears repeatedly in Cyril of Scythopolis, sometimes along with *Akephaloi:* see e.g. *Life of Euthymius* 30; 43; 43; and *Sabas* 30: Anastasius succeeded Zeno, and gave full freedom to the *Aposchistai*; or 57: a petition from the monks of Palestine to Anastasius, naming Severus of Antioch as *akephalos* and *aposchistes*.[30] In the eyes of their opponents, therefore, these pejorative terms were now available at will to describe not dissident sub-groups, but the main body of "monophysites."

(d) Diakrinomenoi ("Those Who Hesitate")

This term is not used frequently, but it is of interest that it is absorbed into Syriac, being explained by John of Ephesus, *HE* 3.12: "*diakrinomenoi*, that is to say orthodox" (ܗܠܝܢ ܕܡܬܦܠܓܝܢ ܗܘ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡܪ ܐܘܪܬܘܕܘܟܣܝܐ).[31] It may indeed be that in this case the "orthodox" had accepted this as one possible form of self-identification. For this is the explanation of the term offered by [Leontius,] *De Sectis*, namely that the followers of Dioscorus of Alexandria (who had been condemned at Chalcedon) seceded from the (Chalcedonian) church, and *called themselves* by this name—and the Emperor Anastasius was one of them.[32]

(e) "Those around Severus"

Given the prominence of Severus of Antioch, both in his Patriarchate of 512–18 C.E. and during his long exile (518–38 C.E.), it is needless to gather expressions relating to his role. But it is worth recording, first, that

28. PG 85:1095–145, e.g. 1140D. See the translation by K. P. Wesche, *On the Person of Christ: The Christology of Emperor Justinian* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991), 27–107.

29. Facundus, *Pro defensione Trium Capitulorum* 1.5.6 (CCL 90A:29: "tamquam sine capite remanentes, Acephali vocantur a Graecis, quos significantius nos Semieutychianos possumus appellare"). See also index.

30. E. Schwartz (ed.), *Kyrillos von Skythopolis*, *TU* 49.2 (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1939); trans. R. M. Price, *Lives of the Monks of Palestine by Cyril of Scythopolis* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1991).

31. John of Ephesus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* (ed. Brooks, *Iohannis Ephesini Historiae Ecclesiasticae Pars Tertia* 3.12 [Syriac text, 137]). Work abbreviated *HE* subsequently.

32. [Leontius,] *De sectis* 4.7 (PG 86:1225C); cf. also 5.3 (1229C): τῶν γὰρ διακρινομένων ἦν ὁ Ἀναστάσιος, ἐφ' οὗ καὶ Σεβῆρος γίνεται ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ ἐπίσκοπος.

Leontius of Byzantium, in his *Against the Nestorians*, speaks of "those around Severus who declare a single nature of Christ" (πρὸς τοὺς περὶ Σεβῆρου, μίαν φύσιν λέγοντας Χριστοῦ).[33] Secondly, and more strikingly, John Moschus, writing his *Spiritual Meadow* in the early years of the seventh century, repeatedly identifies this "heresy" by the name of Severus.[34] Given that he is looking back over a century, a selection of the variety of terms in which he attributes the leadership of this heresy to Severus will be worth setting out. The references are to chapters: 29, a stylite belongs to "the heresy of Severus"; 30, "the *dogma* of Severus" (as opposed to that of the "holy catholic church"); 36, a stylite in the territory of Hierapolis, who belongs to "the non-communicants and *Akephaloi* of Severus" (τῶν Σευήρου ἀκοινωνήτων καὶ Ἀκέφαλων); 106, a monk in Alexandria, a Syrian by birth, who claims to belong to "those of Severus"—and is then overheard "chanting (the Psalms) in the Syrian language" (τῇ Σύρῳ φωνῇ στιχολογούντα); 188, a Syrian who returns from Constantinople and finds some monks "of the *dogma* of Severus" established in his native village; 213, the heresy of "the *akephalos* Severus."

It is noticeable here that the name of Severus and the pejorative term *Akephalos* both function, sometimes in conjunction, as designations of the "heresy" in question—and that in three instances there is an association either with being a native of Syria or with using Syriac in the liturgy, or both.

(f) "Jacobites"

In the longer term this was to become an established designation, associating the "orthodox" with the name of Jacob Baradaeus, one of the first two bishops of the emerging church, consecrated in 542 C.E. and active until his death in 578 C.E. An analogous expression is first found in the *Ecclesiastical History* of John of Ephesus—but is used to identify a party among the "believers," not to refer to the whole movement: 4.21: "(those) of the party of Jacob" (ܕܡܢ ܦܪܨ ܝܥܩܘܒ); 4.39: "those of the party of Paul and of that of Jacob" (ܕܡܢ ܦܪܨ ܦܘܠܘܣ ܘܡܢ ܦܪܨ ܝܥܩܘܒ); see also 4.40.[35]

A similar, but much more revealing, representation of such divisions is provided by the anonymous Syriac *Life* of Jacob, falsely attributed in the manuscript to John of Ephesus:

33. Leontius of Byzantium, *Adversus Nestorianos* 1.22 (PG 86:1488C).

34. Moschus, *Pratum Spirituale* (PG 87:2851–3116); see the excellent introduction and translation by J. Wortley, *The Spiritual Meadow of John Moschus* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1992).

35. John of Ephesus, *HE* (ed. Brooks [n. 31 above], Syriac text, 208, 218, 220; Latin, 156, 164, 165). On the *HE* see further below.

> Hence throughout Syria and in the countries of Persia and of the Armenians the expression became current "we are of the faith of Jacob" (ܕܝܥܩܘܒ ܗܝܡܢܘܬܐ ܕܥܡ); and in Alexandria and Egypt again the expression became current, "We are of Theodosius," so that on this account the believers of Egypt were named "Theodosians" (ܬܐܘܕܘܣܝܐ) and the Syrians "Jacobites" (ܝܥܩܘܒܝܐ).[36]

This remark, in a text which seems to have been composed before the end of the sixth century, is of considerable significance, in indicating both the partisan origins of the term "Jacobites" and the tendency for it to become the accepted name for those of the "orthodox" who lived in the Near East, as opposed to those of Egypt. This implication is borne out by the very striking passage that represents, as Gray shows, a later addition to the text of Leontius of Jerusalem's *Testimonies of the Saints*:

> Οἱ δε Σαρακηνοὶ ἐκ τῆς τῶν Ἰακωβιτῶν αἱρέσεως εἰωθότες κοινωνεῖν, οἳ καὶ αὐτοι τὴν μίαν φύσιν ἐπὶ τοῦ Κυρίου πρεσβεύουσι, καὶ οὗτοι πρῶτοι τοῖς Σαρακηνοῖς συμπεριάγεσθαι κατὰ τὴν ἔρημον καὶ λειτουργεῖν αὐτοῖς ἐπετήδευσαν ὡς ἐπίπαν· οὔτε μὴν οὐδὲ οὗτοι εἰδότες ἢ διδάσκοντες τῶν ἐν Χριστιανοῖς δογμάτων ἐξέτασιν ἢ σύγκρισιν, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ τοῖς Νεστορίου Πέρσαι, οὕτως καὶ οἵδε τοῖς Ἰακώβου φρονήμασι προκατειλημμένοι ἐνετυπώθησαν ἀβασανίστως.
>
> The Arabs, however, traditionally shared in the heresy of the Jacobites, who themselves give pride of place to one nature in the Lord. These Jacobites were the first to make a practice of travelling with the Arabs in the desert and ministering to them in every way. These men neither knew of, nor taught, precision about or comparison between the doctrines held by different Christian groups. Rather, they were converted by the ideas of Jacob [Baradaeus], taking the imprint of these ideas without any examination, much in the way the Persians were converted by the ideas of Nestorius (trans. Gray).[37]

There is no explicit indication of when this added section was written. But it would surely be unreasonable to imagine that this picture of Christian "Arab" (more properly "Saracen") belief could have been composed after the Islamic conquests. So it should date no later than the first three decades of the seventh century, and could belong to the later sixth. John of Ephesus records that when the Emperor Maurice (582–602 C.E.) demanded of the "Ghassanid" or "Jafnid" phylarch Numan that he and

36. *Life of Jacob* (ed. Brooks, PO 19:228–68; quotation from 256, replacing "James" with "Jacob"). On this work see further below.

37. Gray, *Leontius* (n. 24 above), on 38–39. For the text and translation see Gray, 160–61, replacing "Baradatus," evidently a typographical error, with "Baradaeus" (PG 86:1900D).

his father (Mundhir, currently in exile) should be in communion with the "Synodites" (ܣܘܢܐܕܝܐ), namely the Chalcedonians, he replied, "All the tribes of the Tayyoye are orthodox" (ܟܠ ܫܒܛ̈ܐ ܕܛܝܝܐ ܡܗܝܡܢ̈ܐ ܗܘ̈ܝ), and said that they would kill him if he yielded. So, John reports, "the kingdom of the Tayyoye" was divided among fifteen chiefs, some of whom seceded to the Persians.[38]

To return to the addition to Leontius's *Testimonies*, it clearly represents, once again, an outsider's view. But the use of "Jacobites" as a term for the "orthodox" is striking, as is the implication that the believers in one nature who are identified here are in regular contact with the Saracens, and thus are resident in the Near East. It is not unreasonable to take this as a hint of the emergence of what was, in the eyes of the writer, a heresy like that of Nestorius, and of which one particular branch belonged in a specific region.

This sketch of the evolving varieties of vocabulary used by contemporaries, mostly hostile outside observers, to refer to the members of a nascent church who called themselves "orthodox" reveals both the resources of ecclesiastical polemic and the quite clear absence, as yet, of any accepted name that was recognized by non-members, even those firmly opposed. It is worth noting that John Malalas, as a well-placed Antiochene observer writing in the mid-sixth century, uses three different expressions to describe the group with which we are concerned: the persecution (under Justin I) of "those called orthodox;" an order to exile those who refused communion, giving as their reason the Council of Chalcedon; and an edict against the *diakrinomenoi*.[39] Still less was there as yet any equivalent of terms such as the "Roman Catholic" or the "Greek Orthodox" or "Russian Orthodox" Church, combining a claim to universality or to correct belief with the recognition of something resembling an ethnic or linguistic basis. The absence of generally accepted denominational labels did not however mean that the parties within the church had any difficulty in identifying their opponents. The well-known story of conflicts in the Near Eastern provinces in the later fifth and the sixth century, touched on below but not rehearsed in detail, shows that both sides had the clearest of notions of whose names should be removed from the diptychs, or restored to them; or of which

38. John of Ephesus, *HE* 3.56 (ed. Brooks: Syriac text, 181–82; Latin, 135–36).

39. John Malalas, *Chronographia* (ed. I. Thurn, *Iohannis Malalae Chronographia* [Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2000], 17.11; 18.64 and 142; trans. E. Jeffreys, M. Jeffrey, and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of John Malalas* [Melbourne: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1986]).

bishops deserved to be deposed, negotiated with, or subjected to a legal ban. But it was to be only from the 520s onward that the now established dominance of the Chalcedonians led to the beginning of the creation of a separate, "orthodox," church, first with its own clergy, and then with bishops. Moreover, to repeat, in later decades observers did begin to use terms that reflected an awareness that there was a specifically "Syrian" regional element among the "orthodox."

That still leaves open the question of whether the "orthodox" church, evolving within the area where Syriac was spoken as well as Greek, deliberately adopted Syriac rather than Greek as the main language in which its identity was expressed. Some hints of how its members were coming to be characterized as "Syrian," in either ethnic origin or language, have been offered above, and others will appear in what follows. With that, we are still a long way from a specifically *Syrian* "orthodoxy," and still further from nationalism. Nonetheless, with all the caveats which have to be entered, including the continuing role of Greek, and respect for Greek learning, among the "orthodox," and the evidence for the use of Syriac by other groups, it will still be argued below that, if the evidence is collected and laid out item by item, there is abundant proof of a major shift into Syriac as the prime vehicle for the expression of their identity, and their shared history (their "imagined community" in Benedict Anderson's phrase), on the part of the "orthodox" in the eastern provinces of the Empire. The discussion will be selective, merely alluding to the successive phases in the experience of the "orthodox," and concentrating above all on the evidence for language-use.

Three features above all will be singled out: the evidence for original literary composition in Syriac by members of the "orthodox" tradition; the translation into Syriac of works belonging to the same tradition, but originally written in Greek; and the copying of "orthodox" works in codices which are either explicitly dated or can be reasonably attributed to this period. No apology will be made for listing a range of items that are entirely familiar to Syriac specialists. For, first, it cannot be stressed too strongly, or too often, that the availability of a substantial series of original codices copied in this period offers a uniquely vivid and detailed view of a particular tradition and a particular form of religious commitment, of a nature that manuscripts copied in later centuries cannot rival. Second, the particular character of this example of "the invention of tradition"[40]

40. I borrow this expression from the title of the influential book edited by T. Ranger and E. Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

in the fifth to sixth centuries does not yet seem to have been explored for the benefit of students of late antiquity who are not specialists in Syriac.

FROM SHORT-LIVED ACCEPTANCE TO FORMAL CONDEMNATION, 485–536 C.E.

(a) Philoxenus

If there were in the fifth century Syriac speakers who hoped for the creation of a church which was both "orthodox" in rejecting Chalcedon and which used Syriac as its language, the role of Philoxenus (Xenaias) as metropolitan bishop of Hierapolis/Mabbug might have seemed like the dawn of a new era.[41] For Philoxenus, consecrated in 485 C.E. and deposed in 519 in the course of the Chalcedonian reaction under Justin I, was the first bishop of whom we know, occupying a see west of the Euphrates, who wrote entirely in Syriac. Moreover, he was a vigorous and uncompromising opponent of Chalcedon. He is recorded as such in a contemporary letter, of about 512 C.E., composed by the Chalcedonian monks of Palestine, and quoted by the similarly Chalcedonian church historian, Evagrius, at the end of the sixth century;[42] the same role is described from the "orthodox" standpoint, in the Syriac *History* of Ps.-Zachariah (7.8), of the 560s C.E., to which we will return later. The letter which Ps.-Zachariah there says that Philoxenus wrote to the Emperor Zeno (474–91 C.E.) may have been an exception to his systematic use of Syriac, since, at least as received by the emperor, it must have been in Greek (but it could have been translated before being sent, see below).

However, what is important in this context is, first, the wide range of writings by him—homilies, theological treatises, biblical commentaries, and letters—that gave him an enduring place in the "orthodox" tradition. Second, there is his systematic use of Syriac; so for instance, at the end of his letter to Maras, a lector at Anazarbus in Cilicia, he notes that his Syriac text had been translated into Greek. In other words, even when the addressee was a Greek-speaker, he still composed his letter in Syriac.[43]

41. On Philoxenus the standard work is A. de Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog: sa vie, ses écrits, sa théologie* (Louvain: Imprimerie Orientaliste, 1963); note the special issue of *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 13, devoted to Philoxenus.

42. Evagrius, *HE* 3.31 (ed. J. Bidez and L. Parmentier [London: Methuen, 1898]); see the trans. by M. Whitby, *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus,* Translated Texts for Historians 33 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), 168–69.

43. See J. Lebon, "Textes inédits de Philoxène de Mabboug," *Muséon* 43 (1930): 17–84, on 21 (Syr. text on 55; Latin trans. on 80).

Thirdly, there is the powerful representation of his own role and theological standpoint which he offers above all in letters written in the two years of his life which remained after his exile in 519 C.E.: to mention only two examples, his *Letter to the Monks of Senoun*,[44] and his *Letter to the Monks of the Orient*.[45] It is here that he recalls that, as soon as installed as bishop, he had removed from the diptychs the names of Diodore, Theodore, Theodoret, Andreas (of Samosata), Ibas (of Edessa), and Alexander (of Hierapolis itself)—precisely those names whose association with Chalcedon was subsequently to be one of the main stumbling-blocks to reconciliation. He thus claims his own central place in the "orthodox" tradition, and this is reflected also in the reference by Ps.-Zachariah to him, and to another of his letters from exile, after his expulsion in 518/19 C.E.[46]

But our conception of the role of Philoxenus in the tradition of "orthodox" belief can be much more immediate still, for it is reflected in directly contemporary Syriac codices. The most closely relevant of these is one which was written in Hierapolis itself in 510/11 C.E., thus during Philoxenus's tenure, and which contains fragments of his commentary on the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.[47] Philoxenus is identified in the colophon as the author and as bishop of Mabbug, but in the third person, so it is not an actual autograph. The scribe, working in Mabbug, does not identify himself.

A little less concrete in its relationship to Philoxenus is the codex with his commentary on select passages from the Gospels, naming him as author, and written, on the basis of the handwriting, in the first quarter of the sixth century. Neither the scribe nor the place of writing is identified. But it is relevant that the extracts published by Wright exhibit a strongly "orthodox" and polemical tone, directed against heretical "Nestorians," and referring to the doctrines of Diodore and Theodore.[48]

Different considerations apply to another codex, of potentially enormous significance for the history of the Church in late antiquity.[49] In this

44. Philoxenus of Mabboug, *Lettre aux moines de Senoun* (CSCO 231, Scriptores Syri 98–99).

45. See J. Lebon, "Textes inédits," 149–220 (Syr. text on 207; Latin trans. on 218).

46. Ps.-Zach., *HE* 8.5. For text, translation, and commentary see n. 86 below.

47. BL Add. 17126; W. Wright, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1870–72), 2:526 (no. 674). See W. H. P. Hatch, *Album of Dated Syriac Manuscripts* (Boston: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1946; repr. with Introduction by L. Van Rompay, Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2002), no. 8. Henceforward cited as Hatch.

48. BL Add. 14534 (Wright 2:526–27, no. 675).

49. BL Add. 14528 (Wright 2:1030–33, no. 906), fol. 1–151a (the colophon is quoted here, 1032).

case what is significant is the dating, not of the *copying* of this codex, but of the translation into Syriac of the important collection of Greek documents relating to the church councils of the fourth and fifth centuries that it contains:

> There have been recorded in this book 193 canons that have been laid down in eight different councils. They have been translated accurately and clearly from Greek to Aramaic (ܟܬܝܒ ܣܘܪܝܐ ܟ) in the city of Mabbug (ܡܢܒܓ ܩܪܬܐ), in the year 812 of Alexander.

The year is 501 C.E., and this collection of material relating to church councils was made in the metropolitan seat of a controversial "orthodox" bishop who always wrote in Syriac. In reality, the contents are not all canons, but represent a variety of documents (including a list of the bishops attending the Council of Nicaea)[50] deriving from church councils from Nicaea onwards. It should perhaps be stressed that this codex was itself written in the early sixth century (whether actually in 501 C.E. or not), and thus represents, in manuscript terms, by far the earliest documentary evidence for these councils, or aspects of them. It is nowhere stated that either the translation or the copying was made on Philoxenus's initiative; but it is difficult to imagine that the work could have been carried out in Mabbug without his authority.

Philoxenus's episcopate has to be seen as a very significant phase in the evolution of a Syriac-speaking "orthodox" church, and his continuing influence is illustrated, as we will see later, by at least three codices from the second half of the sixth century containing copies of works of his.

(b) Jacob of Sarug

A similarly lasting influence was exerted by the letters and homilies of a contemporary of Philoxenus, Jacob, who was a *periodeutes* in the early sixth century before being briefly bishop of Batnae/Sarug in Osrhoene in 519–21 C.E., and is currently the subject of keen scholarly interest.[51] His 43 known letters, translated recently by Micheline Albert, are important testimony to his biography, to the history of his times and to "orthodox" beliefs.[52] More important still as regards his role in the spiritual history of the "orthodox" were his metrical homilies, reputedly some 760 in all,

50. For the Syriac text of this list see H. Gelzer, H. Hilgenfeld, and O. Cuntz, *Patrum Nicaenorum Nomina* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1898), 97–117.

51. See esp. G. Kiraz, ed., *Jacob of Serugh and His Times: Studies in Sixth-Century Syriac Christianity* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010).

52. M. Albert, *Les lettres de Jacques de Saroug* (Kaslik, Lebanon: Université Saint Esprit de Kaslik, 2004).

of which half still survive, and are currently in the process of publication with facing English translation.[53] This is not the place to attempt to explore this vast material, except to note *Letter* 14, in which he recalls his early experience as a student in Edessa, in the period when the "Nestorian" School of the Persians was still active there, and was having the works of the impious Diodore translated from Greek into Syriac, before its adherents were expelled by the Emperor Zeno (489 C.E.).

In his case there are no contemporary manuscripts, but there is a very significant early one, almost certainly from 551 C.E., so only three decades after his death.[54] Here, after various other items, all translated from Greek, comes the Syriac text of a Creed attributed to Severus of Antioch, followed by four metrical discourses by Jacob: two on the crucifixion, one on the resurrection, and a funeral address. In this case neither the scribe nor the place where the codex was copied is indicated. But it is priceless as early testimony both to the circulation of Jacob's homilies and to the conjunction of his name with that of Severus, whose words, as we will see below, had already begun to be recorded in Syriac translation.

It should be noted that both Philoxenus and, in very significant terms, Jacob of Sarug, are referred to in the contemporary historical work, written in Syriac, and conventionally referred to as the "Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite." In fact, the author is anonymous, and the text survives only because it was inserted between books 2 and 3 of the eighth-century *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, itself preserved in a single manuscript that may well be an autograph by the equally anonymous author.[55]

Addressed to a priest and Archimandrite named Sergius, this work, though profoundly religious in character, is not an ecclesiastical history, and does not speak for any one element in the church. Rather, it is designed to recount and explain the disasters and sufferings caused by the Persian war. After 24 chapters setting out the historical background, the author relates events year by year, in chronicle style, from 494/5 to 506/7 C.E.

53. See the series edited by S. P. Brock and G. Kiraz, *The Metrical Homilies of Jacob of Sarug* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press). The individual volumes appear as items in the series Texts from Christian Late Antiquity.

54. BL Add. 14610 (Wright 2:638–39, 728); Hatch, no. 25, discussed more fully below.

55. What is now generally referred to as the "Chronicle of Zuqnin" was edited and translated into Latin by J.-B. Chabot, *Incerti Auctoris Chronicon Pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum* 1–2 (CSCO 91, 104, 121, Scriptores Syri 43, 66, 53). My treatment is entirely dependent on the translation, introduction and notes by F. R. Trombley and J. W. Watt, *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite,* Translated Texts for Historians 32 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000). References in the text are to the chapter-divisions used by Trombley and Watt.

It was surely completed soon after, since the author refers (83) in extravagantly reverential terms to Flavian, the Patriarch of Antioch: "The holy, pious, divinely-adorned, valiant and glorious, Mar Flavian." This tribute to him, coming towards the end of the work, must have been written before Flavian was deposed in 512 C.E., and replaced by Severus. It will therefore belong in the period before conflict between the "orthodox," supported by Anastasius, and the Chalcedonians became acute. Earlier (30), the author had also referred to "Xenaias" (Philoxenus) in terms which were critical, but also reflected his authority and prestige, apparently recognized in a province which was not his own. In 497 C.E. the people of Edessa celebrated a pagan festival:

> There was no one who would reprimand, reprove or advise them, for although Xenaias, the bishop of Mabbug, happened to be in Edessa (at the time), and more than any others he is supposed to take on himself the labor of teaching, he did not speak to them about this matter for more than a day.

If this passage leaves it not entirely clear what the author's attitude to Philoxenus was, there is no such doubt about his account of Jacob, later to be bishop of Sarug. In 502 C.E., after the Persian capture of Amida, he records that there was a general panic in the cities east of the Euphrates, and many prepared to flee (54, trans. Watt, with minor variations):

> But the respected Jacob, the *periodeutes*, who composed many *memre* [homilies] on sections of the Scriptures and *sogyatha* [poems] and *zmirata* [songs] on the time of the locusts, did not neglect his duty at that time. He wrote letters of exhortation to all the cities, encouraging (people) to trust in divine salvation and not to flee.

What he wrote to Edessa is preserved as *Letter* 20 (see n. 52). But what is significant here is the unambiguous recognition of both Jacob's literary reputation and his moral standing, long before he became a bishop. Overall, there is nothing sufficiently distinctive in the narrative to demonstrate that the author belonged clearly to the "orthodox" faction of the church. But if what we read is merely the testimony of a deeply devout, Syriac-speaking, contemporary observer from Edessa, that is perhaps even more illuminating as regards the later evolution of a separatist church distinguished by its attachment to Syriac.

(c) John of Tela

Following this testimony to the standing of Jacob as the author of a long series of devotional works in Syriac, we need to note the very important role in the formation of an "orthodox" church which was distinctively

"Syrian" played by another bishop of this period, John of Tela. As such, the biography of him by Elias, written after his death in 538 C.E., will be considered along with other material dating from after the crisis of 536 C.E.[56] So the question of whether this very significant biography, preserved in Syriac in manuscripts of the eighth-ninth centuries, was a translation from Greek or an original composition in Syriac written in the 540s C.E. can be postponed for the moment. What is beyond doubt is the importance of John of Tela's own life, not least as regards the role within it of the coexistence of Greek and Syriac.

Elias records that John came from Callinicum on the Euphrates, and belonged to a prominent local family. As such, he received a Greek education, and at age twenty entered service "in the *praetorium* of the *dux* of the city" (ܒܬܪܝܘܢ ܕܣܟܪܛܪ ܕܩܘܪܝܣ ܕܩܪܝܬܐ), which must mean the staff of a military officer (*dux*) commanding a unit stationed there (39). Turning to ascetic Christian belief, John began to study the Psalms in Syriac, and would recite them together with his teacher (43). Whether he had been bilingual from the beginning is not made clear. The rest of the *Life* centers on the persecutions which followed the accession of Justin I in 518 C.E., John's brief period (519–21 C.E.) as bishop of Tela, and then the permission which he received from Severus, now also in exile, to ordain priests (ܩܫܝܫܐ) for cities and villages—and thus to free many from communion with heretics (59). This is in fact the earliest date to which any source attributes the ordination of specifically "orthodox" clergy. This report is followed immediately by a reference to John's participation in the debates convened by Justinian in 532 C.E., on which see more below. There followed (60) a mission to save Christians in Sasanid territory from the dyophysite heresy (ܠܡܫܕܪܘܬܗ ܕܡܗܝܡܢܝ). Intervention by Ephraim, the persecuting Chalcedonian Patriarch of Antioch, led to John's arrest, when he is found being interrogated by a Sasanid official: "and he (the official) spoke to him in Greek (ܒܝܘܢܝܐ) through an interpreter" (ܘܡܬܪܓܡܢ ܗܘܐ), and John answered by the same means (71–72). The episode is a striking example of the use of Greek as a "vehicular language" in the late antique Near East. But John's insistence on relying on an interpreter must have been a deliberate choice, since he clearly knew Greek. The rest of the narrative concerns his being transported to Antioch, and his death there, in 538 C.E.

As regards the various works by, or attributed to, John of Tela, the same

56. *Vitae Virorum apud Monophysitas celeberrimorum* (ed. E. W. Brooks, CSCO 7–8, Scriptores Syri ser. 3.25: Syriac text, 29–95; Latin trans. 21–60). There is no translation into a modern language, or commentary. References below will be to pages of the Syriac text.

questions arise as with other "orthodox" writers. Is Syriac the language in which they were originally written? Are there Syriac texts of them dating to the pre-Islamic period, and if so is there reason to think that they were copied in an "orthodox" monastery?

The works concerned, devoted to doctrine or ecclesiastical discipline, have been very well discussed recently by Volker Menze and Kutlu Alkalin in the introduction to the text and translation of the most substantial of them, John's *Profession of Faith* (ܟܬܒ ܗܘܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܘܚܢܢ ܐܣܩܦܐ ܕܬܠܐ).[57] Like all the works that circulated under John's name, this is preserved in Syriac, in this case in a codex of the eighth or ninth century.[58] Addressed to the monks of the monasteries around Tela/Constantina, it is a prime expression of the theology of "orthodoxy" and the rejection of Chalcedon, and there seems no reason to doubt that Syriac was its original language. The same seems to apply to his other works, notably his 48 *Questions and Answers*,[59] and his *Canons*, which cannot be discussed here. While it should be presumed, unless contrary evidence appears, that they were written in Syriac for the benefit of John's "orthodox" brethren, there do not seem to be any manuscript copies of them from the sixth or early seventh century. We know, however, of the prominent place which he occupied in the history of the "orthodox" from the chapter (24) devoted to him in John of Ephesus's *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, written in the 560s C.E.[60]

(d) Severus of Antioch

In strong contrast to the figures just discussed, the key point about Severus, and his prominent role, both before and after his Patriarchate of Antioch in 512–18 C.E., is that, as the most prominent "orthodox" leader of his time, he represents a wholly Greek aspect of the life of this wing of the Church: in his origins and career; in his own writings; and in the earliest written accounts of him.

A Greek-speaker from Sozopolis in Pisidia, from a pagan family, he had studied, in traditional style, in Alexandria and Berytus before his conversion, and attraction into monastic life. Already involved in the rep-

57. John of Tela, *Profession of Faith* (ed. and trans. V. Menze and K. Alkalin, *John of Tella's* Profession of Faith*: The Legacy of a Sixth-Century Syrian Orthodox Bishop* [Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009]).

58. The Syriac text with Latin translation was first edited in Th. J. Lamy, *Dissertatio de Syrorum fide et disciplina in re eucharistica* (Louvain: Vanlinthout, 1859), 62–97. For further editions, see Menze and Alkalin, 13.

59. BL Add. 14549, Wright 2:428–31, no. 656.

60. John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints* (ed. Brooks, PO 18.4:312–24 [514–26]). The *Lives* are discussed more fully below.

resentation of the "orthodox" case before Anastasius in Constantinople in 508–11 C.E., he became Patriarch in 512 C.E. with the active support of Philoxenus, as metropolitan of Hierapolis. Like Philoxenus, in his first address (*prosphonesis*) as Patriarch he pronounced anathema on Chalcedon (and the *Tome* of Leo), on Diodore and Theodore, as the teachers of Nestorius, and on Theodoret, Andreas, Ibas, and Alexander. But the text of this *prosphonesis*, delivered and circulated in Greek, survives only in Syriac translation, in a codex of the eighth or ninth century.[61]

The Patriarchate of Severus has left a mass of evidence in the form of his own extensive writings, of later narrative accounts and of the accusations brought against him by his enemies in 518–19 C.E., when he fled to Egypt, and again in 536 C.E., when he was condemned at the Synod of Constantinople. All of it is now analyzed in great detail by F. Alpi in a major new work.[62] Few late antique bishops can have left so extensive a body of writing—homilies delivered while patriarch, and letters and theological and polemical works from then, and from both before and after; for, while in exile from 518 C.E. to his death twenty years later, he continued to exercise a major influence.

In the present context, since the central role of Severus was fulfilled entirely in Greek, what is significant is the question of when and in what forms his works were translated into Syriac, and began to circulate in Syriac. It is therefore very noteworthy that the evidence for this begins already in his lifetime, at least ten years before his death. This is shown by an extremely important codex copied in 528 C.E. in Edessa, and preserved in the Vatican Library (*Vat*. 140). This codex, in 145 double-sided leaves disposed in three columns, has never been published in either a printed version or a facsimile, and our knowledge of it depends on the ten-page summary in Latin, with some quotations from the Syriac, in the eighteenth-century Vatican catalogue.[63] The colophon (fol. 145v, on 232) deserves quotation:

61. BL Add. 14533, fol. 104a (Wright 2:967–76, on 970, 859, no. 15). Syriac text in M.-A. Kugener, *Sévère Patriarche d'Antioche 512–518: textes syriaques publiés, traduits et annotés*, PO 2.3:322–24.

62. F. Alpi, *La route royale: Sévère d'Antioche et les églises d'Orient (512–518)* 1–2 (Beirut: Institut français du Proche-Orient, 2009). The fundamental study of his works, almost all preserved only in their Syriac form, remains that of M. Brière, "Introduction générale aux homélies de Sévère d'Antioche," PO 29.1:7–72; see also P. Allen and C. T. R. Hayward, *Severus of Antioch* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).

63. *Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae Codicum Manuscriptorum Catalogus* 1.3 (Rome, 1759, repr. Paris: Librairie Orientale et Américaine, 1926), 223–33; Hatch no. 12. Subsequent entries cited as *Vat*. and number. As regards *Vat*. 140, D. King,

> This book (ܟܬܒ ܟܬܒܐ) was completed in the month of Nisan in the year 839 in the city of ܐܘܪܗܝ (Edessa) in Mesopotamia in the time of the Archimandrite (ܪܝܫ ܐܒܗ̈ܬܐ) Mar Iochanan son of Aphthonius, of the monastery at Seleucia of the venerable Thomas, by the industry of Mar Paulus of Callinicum, who saw to it that these books of the holy and blessed Patriarch Mar Severus were translated from Greek into Syriac, as follows . . .

Paul had been one of the "orthodox" bishops deposed at the beginning of Justin's reign, and had evidently moved to Edessa. How soon the work of translation had begun is not clear, and it might even have been while both he and Severus were still in office. No scribe is identified in the colophon, and Baumstark raises in passing the question of whether this substantial collection of translations might actually be an autograph, in which Paul refers to himself in the third person.[64] But it is more likely that a bishop such as Paul will not have copied out with his own hand a text for circulation.

As will be seen later, various important codices of the second half of the sixth century—notably BL Add. 14599 of 569 C.E., with a collection of 38 of Severus's *Cathedral Homilies*—contain Syriac translations of works of Severus which may well also have been made by Paul. But for the moment the codex of 528 C.E., concentrating on works of theological polemic by both Severus himself and his opponents—which themselves were classic examples of Greek theological argument—will be enough to establish how early, and on what a substantial scale, Severus's works began to receive translation into Syriac.

(e) The Syriac Acts of the Second Council of Ephesus

Highly significant as the Vatican codex of 528 C.E. is, it could be argued that it is exceeded in importance by a codex from the British Library copied seven years later, in 535 C.E.[65] This is the well-known Syriac version

---

The Syriac Versions of the Writings of Cyril of Alexandria (Louvain: Peeters, 2008), 175, is incorrect in implying that the reference to the Seleucid year 839 indicates the time of translation; it indicates the date of copying.

64. A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur* (Bonn: Marcus und Weber, 1922), 160, n. 3.

65. BL Add. 14530 (Wright 2:1027–30, no. 905); English translation by S. G. F. Perry, *The Second Synod of Ephesus* (Dartford, UK: Orient Press, 1881); Syriac text, German translation and commentary, J. Flemming, *Akten der Ephesinischen Synode vom Jahre 449 Syrisch*, Abh. Kön. Ges. Wiss. Göttingen, Ph.-Hist. Kl., n.f. 15.1 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1917); Hatch, no. 18; see also F. Millar, "The Syriac Acts of the Second Council of Ephesus (449)," in *Chalcedon in Context: Church Councils 400–700*, eds. R. Price and M. Whitby (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 46–69.

of a detailed, but selective, record of the *Acts* of a session at the Second Council of Ephesus held in 449 C.E., which had signified an emphatic, but short-lived, victory for the "orthodox" cause.

The proceedings at Ephesus had of course been conducted in Greek, and whatever records were taken of them will also have been in Greek. It is beyond question that the Syriac version copied in 535 C.E. was translated from a Greek original, as is demonstrated, if necessary, by the fact that it retains the term "translation" (ܬܘܪܓܡܐ) when speaking of any Syriac elements in the original. The most striking and important of these elements is the notorious and much-quoted letter of Ibas to "Mari the Persian," occupying fol. 33b–36b. Containing an account of the First Council of Ephesus of 431 C.E., with a hostile view of Cyril of Alexandria and praise for the teaching of Theodore of Mopsuestia, this was one of the "Three Chapters"—texts of a "Nestorian" tendency which the Council of Chalcedon had, at the least, failed to condemn decisively—which were to be central to the Christological debates of the sixth century.

It is very likely that the version of Ibas's letter found in the codex is a re-translation from earlier Greek *Acts*; but it cannot be ruled out that the Syriac original had still been accessible, and had been inserted here. What is striking at any rate is that this "Nestorian" document, originally quoted in 449 C.E. as an example of heresy, has been subtly converted by the scribe of 535 C.E. into something which makes a different impression. For, as color photos supplied by the British Library reveal, each time that the name of Cyril of Alexandria appears it is highlighted in red ink.

The *Acts*, as reflected in the Syriac version, concern the deposition and condemnation of various bishops, including Ibas himself and Theodoret, who were suspected of "Nestorian" tendencies. The details need not be rehearsed here, since the motive for producing a copy of them in Syriac in 535 C.E. is perfectly clear. What is important is the context revealed by the two personal statements by the scribe himself (who now switches to a smaller and less formal script), which occupy fol. 108r–v. The first of these, which is in essence a normal colophon, written in tones of deep personal devotion, reveals, first, that copying was carried out in year 846 of Alexander (whether this implies that the Syriac translation was itself made then is unclear); and second, that it took place in the monastery of Kapra dBarta under the Archimandrite Iochanan, who is known on other evidence, to be discussed below, as a pillar of "orthodoxy." Kapra dBarta was a village near Apamea, and this is significant in itself, in that in this period only relatively few Syriac codices were copied so far west, in the territories of Antioch or Apamea (and none at all, so far as I know, further west, on the Mediterranean coast).

These two city-territories, on the western borders of the Syriac-speaking zone, are reflected also in the second affirmation, in which the scribe identifies himself by name and origin (fol. 108v): "I, the sinful, wretched and insignificant Iochanan, who am from the territory (ܟܘܪܬܐ—χώρα) of Antioch, and am resident in the house of Mar Eusebius at Kapra dBarta, have written this book."

Whether we wish to classify these *Acts* as documents or as polemical narratives, this is the second occasion, so far as we know, when material of either type, recording moments in earlier ecclesiastical history, and available in Greek, was translated into Syriac. But the material translated in 501 C.E. and copied in Hierapolis (see above), was a collection of disparate elements relating (broadly speaking) to a succession of councils. The codex of 535 C.E. is far more vivid and coherent testimony to the importance of earlier history for "orthodox" collective identity.

(f) The Debates of 532 C.E. in Constantinople

The codex of 535 C.E. was copied at the end of a phase of attempted reconciliation between the Chalcedonians and the "orthodox," vigorously promoted by the Emperor Justinian in person. When history-writing in Syriac in the second half of the sixth century is considered below, it will show abundant evidence for letters exchanged between the emperor and "orthodox" bishops in these years, all of them of course sent originally in Greek, but subsequently incorporated in Syriac narratives. But one episode from this phase deserves special attention, in that it raises the question of whether by now outsiders had come to see the "orthodox" as either "Easterners" or specifically as Syrians. These are the debates between the "orthodox" and the Chalcedonian bishops whom Justinian summoned to Constantinople in 532 C.E.; no less an authority than Sebastian Brock has used the term "Syrian Orthodox" here, strictly speaking anachronistically, but with some justification.[66] The sources for this event are remarkably rich and various. First there is the account in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Ps.-Zachariah (9.15), itself to be discussed below, which he says depends on a record made by the Archimandrite John bar Aphthonia. Whether or not this record was originally put together in Syriac, it is probably to be identified with the Syriac text published by Sebastian Brock from a Harvard manuscript of the eighth or ninth century. There is also an eighth-century manuscript from the British Library (BL Add. 12155) with a variant text.

66. S. Brock, "The Conversations with the Syrian Orthodox under Justinian (532)," *OCP* 47 (1981): 87–121, repr. in *Studies in Syriac Christianity* (Aldershot, UK: Variorum, 1992), no. 13.

Finally, there is the account by one of the Chalcedonian representatives, Innocentius of Maronea, preserved in Latin translation, but certainly written originally in Greek.[67]

The debates themselves will also, unquestionably, have been conducted in Greek. It is noteworthy, however, that those on the "orthodox" side all came from the area where Syriac was in use as well as Greek. The names given vary in different accounts, but the episcopal sees recorded form a consistent group: Cyrrhus, Germanicia, Doliche, Theodosiopolis/ Reshaina, Constantina/Tela (namely John of Tela, whose role is discussed above), Circesium, Dara. In the available records they refer to themselves consistently, and only, as the "orthodox" (ܡܗܝܡܢܐ), without using any geographical or ethnic label. Not surprisingly, however, Innocentius, in the Latin version of his record, calls them "Orientales" (Ἀνατολικοί in the original), which however need not mean anything more specific than that they came from the civil diocese of Oriens. But it is very significant that at the end he reports that he and his colleagues had discussions, though interpreters, with Syriac-speaking clerics who had accompanied the "orthodox" bishops, and that some of these were converted to acceptance of Chalcedon. Not only this specific report but also the whole structure of the occasion suggests that outsiders had begun to perceive the "orthodox" not as specifically "Syrian," which they patently were not, but as having a Syriac-speaking area as one of their main bases.

(g) The Synod of Constantinople

A comparable stress on the Syrian identity of one of the main actors, or subjects, is visible in the conflicts leading up to the Synod of Constantinople of 536 C.E., when three leading "orthodox" figures, Severus of Antioch, Anthimus, the bishop of Constantinople, and the monk Zooras, were formally condemned, in a verdict confirmed by Justinian. As we have seen, Severus, though Patriarch of Antioch until his flight and deposition in 518 C.E., was a Greek theologian whom no one would have characterized as a *Suros*. Zooras (ܙܘܥܪܐ), on the other hand, was a monk from somewhere in the area of Amida, and was to be the subject of the second of John of Ephesus's *Lives of the Eastern Saints*.[68] It is very relevant to

67. Printed by E. Schwartz in *ACO* 4.2:169–84. For the quotations from Innocentius see para. 3 (on 169), "propter Orientales episcopos qui, cum Severo a sancta catholica et apostolica ecclesia separati sunt"; and 90 (on 184), "ex quibus quidam lingua Syriatica per interpretes locuti sunt."

68. John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints* (ed. Brooks, PO 17:18–35). The passages quoted are on 27 and 34–35.

the nature of this intimate portrait of a Syrian holy man that John was in Constantinople during Zooras's visit in (it seems) 535/6 C.E., and reports personal discussions with him. Zooras came to the capital to confront the emperor in the name of "orthodoxy," and is claimed by John to have attained considerable notoriety. But then Agapetus, the bishop or pope of Rome, arrived in Constantinople in winter 535/6 C.E. and stimulated a wholesale assault on "orthodoxy" in support of Chalcedon. So he is reported by John of Ephesus as having asked Justinian, "What is the reason why this Syrian deceiver (ܟܕܒܐ ܣܘܪܝܐ ܗܢܐ ܕܗܳܐ) who is here is allowed by you to convert the world to his deception?" But Zooras, by his spiritual power, persisted and (John claims) gained considerable influence among the people. So the "heretics" (Chalcedonians) in the churches and monasteries were alarmed, and made mass public protests to Justinian: "If the Syrian does not depart from the city, it is ruined!"

This might seem mere dramatic coloring. But the very detailed Greek *Acts* of the Synod itself show otherwise.[69] For one of the documents quoted is a petition (*libellos*) addressed to Justinian by the Archimandrites of Constantinople, along with those resident in the city who came from the Judaean Desert and Syria Secunda, Mt Sinai, and the Three Palestines; no less than 97 subscriptions by individuals are attached. The petition is directed against "those who damage the holy Church of God," who are identified as follows:

> Φαμὲν δὴ Σεβήρου καὶ Πέτρου τῶν δυσσεβῶν καὶ τὰ ὅμοια τούτοις φρονούντων ἀπὸ Εὐτυχοῦς καὶ Διοσκόρου καταγομένων Ἀκεφάλων αἱρετικῶν, ὧν εἷς ἐστιν καὶ ὁ μάλιστα διαταράξας τό γε ἐπ' αὐτῷ τὴν ἁγίαν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκκλησίαν Ζωόρας τις Σύρος ἀλόγιστος πλήρης πάσης ἀνοίας καὶ μανίας.
>
> We mean (against) the impious Severus and Peter [formerly bishop of Apamea] and those heretical *Akephaloi* who think like them, following Eutyches and Dioscorus; of them there is one above all who, so far as is within his power, has disturbed the holy Church of God, one Zooras, an irrational *Suros*, full of every sort of folly and madness.

It should be said that abusive ethnic descriptions of this sort are hardly ever attested in our evidence, either on the part of Greeks speaking of "Syrians," or "Syrians" of Greeks. Nonetheless, our sources from the 530s do offer slight hints that what contemporaries felt was at stake in

69. Edited by E. Schwartz in *ACO* 3: *Collectio Sabbaitica contra Acephalos et Origeniastas destinata* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1940), 25–189. No translation into a modern language has been made, but the structure of the *Acts* is analyzed by F. Millar, "Rome, Constantinople and the Near Eastern Church under Justinian: Two Synods of C.E. 536," *JRS* 98 (2008): 62–82, on 72–74. The passage quoted comes from paragraph 12 (32).

the great Christological issues which divided the Church was coming to be colored by the presence in the public arena of people perceived as "Syrians," defined not by coming from the provinces of Syria I or II (as Zooras did not), but by language and culture (or lack of it).

AFTER THE SYNOD OF CONSTANTINOPLE

The period which followed the condemnation of Severus and his associates in 536 C.E. opens a new phase in the evolution of "orthodox" self-awareness, in that it is now, for the first time, that we encounter narrative writing in Syriac which was specifically "orthodox" in character. At first, as will be seen, this was predominantly hagiographical or biographical in nature, devoted to those who suffered in the Chalcedonian "persecution," which marked the reigns of Justin I and Justinian. This style of writing, a prime example of the creation of a historical identity, was to find its culmination in John of Ephesus's *Lives of the Eastern Saints*. But in the second half of the century we also see the composition of ecclesiastical histories in Syriac, covering also political and military events, which were written from an "orthodox" perspective. These partisan narrative works, whether biographical or historical, are an important new element in the already-established patterns of self-expression by the "orthodox" in Syriac. As noted above, we also find, as before, extensive translation of Greek works into Syriac; the composition of original works in Syriac; and—the aspect which is the most striking to the non-specialist—the vast range of scribal activity and the production of codices, as shown by contemporary copies.

Two cautions need to be entered. First, there was also translation from Greek (notably by the major figure of Sergius of Reshaina), and composition and copying in Syriac, which was not connected with the "orthodox."[70] Second, Greek remained in this period, for the "orthodox" as for the Chalcedonians, the established language of public expression, as used in theological treatises, in letters to bishops or groups of bishops from other areas, and in communications with the church of Constantinople and with the emperors. As will be seen below, the most important single dossier of "orthodox" documents, assembled in Syriac and known from a codex of the late sixth or early seventh century, consists entirely of writings from this period that had been composed originally in Greek.

70. On Sergius and his role as a translator see the paragraph devoted to him in Ps.-Zach., *HE* 9.19, with comments by G. Greatrex (see n. 86 below), and the survey of his known translations of medical and philosophical works, in I. Ortíz de Urbina, *Patrologia Siriaca,* 2nd ed. (Rome: Pont. Inst. Or. Stud., 1965), 110–11.

It also has to be presumed that all of the key figures in the "monophysite movement" (so W. H. C. Frend) could and did speak, write and understand Greek; this applies beyond question to, for instance, Jacob Baradaeus, whose missionary efforts took him far beyond the Syriac-speaking area, and to John of Ephesus himself, who was normally resident in Constantinople for the last four decades of his life, apart from his famous expeditions to convert pagans in Asia, where he will also have had to use Greek.

In the broader social context we cannot be sure how far Greek-Syriac bilingualism was prevalent, or, in the case of those who were to some degree bilingual, whether literary composition in the other language would have been feasible. What is certain, however, is, first, that in the wider Greek world, from Egypt to Thrace, all ecclesiastical communications, written or spoken, will have been in Greek; that all Christian thought and theology derived from a mass of patristic writing in Greek; and that "orthodox" thought, even that coming from the areas where Syriac was spoken, was still, in the later sixth century, being expressed in Greek as well as Syriac.

The "presence" of Greek therefore needs no emphasis. The goal that will be pursued here is to record the very substantial evidence for translation from Greek into Syriac, for composition in Syriac and for the copying of Syriac codices, which is available from this period. When that is done, there will still be profound questions as to how we should interpret the practice of Syriac writing within its wider Greek context.

(a) Syriac Narrative Writing Up to the Mid-Sixth Century

We have good reasons to believe that in the years following the Synod of 536 C.E. narrative (historical or biographical) writing, portraying the experience of the "orthodox" in a hostile world, was actively practiced. One certain example, no longer preserved, is the history of the persecutions by the "synodites" (Chalcedonians) by John of Ephesus. At the beginning of the 35th of his *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, written in the later 560s C.E. (see below), when talking of the monasteries of the Amidenes, he mentions that thirty years earlier he had written another book about the persecution (ܟܬܒܢܐ ܕܒܗ ܥܒܕ ܫܘܬܦ ܟܬܒ̈ܐ).[71] This book will thus have been written towards the end of the 530s, and we can presume that, like John's other works, it had been in Syriac.

The same presumption cannot be so confidently made about the *Life*

71. John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints* 35 (PO 18:[405]–623[421]; the passage quoted is from 607 [425]). See now the admirable account of all that can be known of John's life and works by S. Destephen, *Prosopographie Chrétienne du Bas-Empire: Diocèse d'Asie (325–641)* (Paris: Association des amis du centre d'histoire et civilization de Byzance, 2008), 3:494–519, s.v. "Ioannes" 43.

of John of Tela by Elias, not yet translated into any modern language, which as we have seen, is one of the most vivid and important sources for the "orthodox" experience in this period, as well as for the interplay between Syriac and Greek.[72] John came originally from Callinicum and died aged 55 in 538 C.E., Elias's *Life* of him seems to have been written soon after; but, since Elias refers (Syriac text, 27) to the subsequent capture of Callinicum in 542 C.E., it must have been completed no earlier than that. But was it originally composed in Greek or in Syriac? It is *preserved* only in Syriac, in two codices, of which the earlier belongs to the ninth century.[73] So we must allow for the possibility that this is a translation from a Greek original. But the Mesopotamian context, and the parallel with the lost *History* of the same period by John of Ephesus, mentioned above, make it much more probable that this contemporary biography had been written in Syriac.

Another example of the same genre of writing was evidently the brief *Life* of John, Archimandrite of the monastery of Beth Aphthonia, which is included in a twelfth-century codex in the British Library that contains a large number of *Lives* of saints.[74] Here the unnamed author proclaims himself as a pupil of John, who, after various changes of fortune during the persecutions, also died in 538 C.E. This *Life*, surely written soon after, evidently influenced the later Syriac sources from which the outlines of his biography are known.[75]

These narratives, of which two certainly and one (the *History* by John of Ephesus) very probably, were of a biographical or hagiographical character, devoted to the experiences of their subjects in a period of persecution, can be regarded as prime examples of the formation of a specifically "orthodox" foundation-story, or myth of origins.

(b) The Commentary on the Psalms *by Daniel of Salah, 542 C.E.*

This very substantial Syriac text, as yet unpublished, can be seen as also having contributed, in a very different way, to the formation of an "orthodox" outlook. All the material relating to it is set out in an important article by David Taylor, which will merely be summarized here.[76] The work

72. See n. 56 above.

73. BL Add. 14622 (Wright 3:1150–51, no. 978).

74. BL Add. 12174, fol. 84a–87b (Wright 3:1124, no. 960, no. 5).

75. See W. Wright, *A Short History of Syriac Literature* (London: Black, 1894), 83–85.

76. See D. G. K. Taylor, "The Psalm Commentary of Daniel of Salah and the Formation of Sixth-Century Syrian Orthodox Identity," in B. ter Haar Romeny (ed.), *Religious Origins of Nations?* (n. 15 above), 65–92.

occupies three codices with over 1200 manuscript pages in all, and consists of 150 self-contained homilies on the individual Psalms in succession. Its relevance is, first, that it was commissioned by John, the Archimandrite of the "orthodox" monastery of Eusebius at Kapra dBarta (where the Syriac *Acts* of the Second Council of Ephesus had been copied in 535 C.E., see above), as letters between John and Daniel show. John is also listed by Michael the Syrian (9.4) as having been condemned by Justinian for opposing Chalcedon.

The second vital point is that the commentary on Psalm 93 gives the current date as Seleucid year 853, hence 542 C.E.

The third essential point, as David Taylor sets it out, is that a consistent theme runs through the commentary, or homilies, namely the necessity of giving precedence to God, as opposed to any earthly ruler. The relevance of this proposition to the current situation of the "orthodox" is obvious.

(c) Codex of (probably) 551 C.E. With Various Theological Works Including the Creed of Severus of Antioch and Four of the Metrical Discourses of Jacob of Sarug

Neither the name of the scribe nor the place where it was copied is indicated in the surviving leaves.[77] At the beginning (fol. 19), however, there is a reference to Seleucid year 862, 551 C.E., which is presumably the current year. The inclusion of works by both Severus and Jacob makes it clear that this is an "orthodox" collection.

(d) Codex Copied Before 562 C.E., Incorporating a Syriac Version of the Acts of the First Session of the Second Council of Ephesus

This codex, of 137 leaves, contains a large selection of theological texts in Syriac translation.[78] Its approximate date is secure, since near the end (fol. 136) we find not only the name of the scribe, Talya of Edessa (ܬܠܝܐ ܕܐܘܪܗܝ ܟܬܒ), but an indication, in a different hand, of the fact that the codex had been presented in Seleucid year 873, 562 C.E., by the deaconess Magla (ܡܓܠܐ ܕܝܘܩܢܐ) to some unidentified beneficiary, presumably a monastery.

Among the many texts contained in this codex, the one which is most important for the history of the "orthodox" is the Syriac version of the *Acts* of the first session of the Second Council of Ephesus of 449 C.E. (fol.

77. BL Add. 14610 (Wright 2:638–39, no. 728; Hatch, no. 21).
78. BL Add. 12156 (Wright 2:639–48, no. 729).

51b–61a). There are no independent Greek or Latin manuscripts of these *Acts*, which are known otherwise only through extracts quoted, at great length, in the Greek and Latin *Acts* of the first session of the Council of Chalcedon, held two years later. The potential importance of this Syriac version, of not later than the mid-sixth century, may be gauged from the fact that the earliest Greek manuscripts of these *Acts* belong to the eleventh and twelfth centuries, while the standard Latin version, which is in fact the most detailed and authoritative, and was put together in Constantinople in the 560s C.E., is known from a manuscript of the ninth century.[79]

It must therefore seem astounding that this version has never been studied in detail, or even printed. Some extracts from this and other parts of the codex were published in 1877 by S. G. F. Perry.[80] But the only available guide to the structure and content of these Syriac *Acts* is the translation provided by Perry in an appendix to his translation of the Syriac version of the *Acts* of a later session, or sessions, of the same council, copied in 535 C.E. (see above).[81] The substantial Syriac text of the *Acts* of the first session, occupying 36 pages in Perry's translation, remains to be printed, and to be compared with the long Greek and Latin quotations contained in the *Acts* of Chalcedon—which depend on manuscripts which are three to six centuries later.

(e) Codex of 563 C.E. with 25 Cathedral Homilies, Numbered as 101–25, of Severus of Antioch

This codex of 184 leaves, preserved in the Vatican Library, contains, in Syriac translation, a continuous section of the sequence of *Cathedral Homilies* delivered in Greek by Severus as Patriarch of Antioch.[82] This Syriac version is possibly that which had been made by Paul of Callinicum, not later than 528 C.E. (see above); but this is not explicitly stated. The colophon (fol. 184r) records that it was copied in Seleucid year 874, 563 C.E., in the time of the presbyter Georgios. A second note (fol. 184v) asks readers to pray for Samuel and Thomas, "eastern brothers" (ܐܚ̈ܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ), monks in the same sacred monastery of the holy Iochanan at Nerab (ܕܢܪܒ̈ܐ)—hence clearly the place where copying was carried out; see also (k) below.

79. For a succinct and clear guide to the transmission of the Greek and Latin *Acts* see R. Price and M. Gaddis, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), 1:75–83.

80. See S. G. F. Perry, *Syriac Documents Relating to the Second Synod of Ephesus (AD 449)* (Oxford: Pickhard Hall and Stacy, 1877), extracts B, D, I and K.

81. See S. G. F. Perry, (n. 65 above), App. D (401–36).

82. *Vat.* no. 143 (246–50); Hatch, no. 25.

(f) Codex of 564 C.E. with Theological Tractates by Philoxenus of Mabbug

This codex, also in the Vatican Library, is recorded in the colophon (fol. 161) as having been copied in Seleucid year 875, 564 C.E.,[83] and represents a different aspect of the "orthodox" tradition in Syriac, since Philoxenus had written consistently in Syriac (see above). So these are copies of the original texts, not translations.

(g) Codex of 565 C.E. with Metrical Discourses by Jacob of Sarug

This codex too contains "orthodox" theological or Biblical discourses that had originally been written in Syriac, and are not translations.[84] The colophon (fol. 117b) records that it has been written in Edessa, "the blessed city" (ܥܝܪܐ ܥܝܪܐ ܒܫܝܡܐ) in Seleucid year 876, 565 C.E., and is the property of the presbyter Theodoros, a "westerner" (ܡܥܪܒܝܐ) from the territory of Apamea.

(h) John of Ephesus, Lives of the Eastern Saints, *c. 568 C.E.*

The series of 58 *Lives* of monks and bishops by John of Ephesus is the prime example of the creation of a historical narrative, or rather of a set of linked biographical narratives, representing the history of the "orthodox" in the face of a hostile Chalcedonian world. The approximate date of writing is secure, since the last of the *Lives* (in this case in fact a history of the monastery of John Urtaya at Amida) brings the story up to the present year, Seleucid year 879, 568 C.E.; while his passing references in *Life* 50 to Conon of Tarsus and Eugenius of Seleucia in Isauria give no hint of their prominent role in the Tritheist heresy, which broke out at about this time.[85]

The first 24 of the *Lives* are devoted to men from John's home region, Mesopotamia, and other figures from there appear frequently later. Nonetheless, this is not a purely regional narrative, but ranges more widely, including Egypt. Nor does the question of whether his subjects were Syriac-speaking or not play any significant part. It remains striking that this major example of Syriac historiography or biography, devoted to the collective experience of the "orthodox," in Mesopotamia above all, should

83. *Vat.* no. 137 (217–18); Hatch, no. 26.

84. BL Add. 17157 (Wright 2:504–5, no. 636).

85. John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints* (ed. Brooks, PO 17.1; 18.4; 19.2). For the reference to the current year see PO 19:227 [573]. See S. A. Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis: John of Ephesus and the Lives of the Eastern Saints* (Berkeley, CA and London: California University Press, 1990), and Destephen (n. 71 above).

have been written in Constantinople, where its author had already been resident for some three decades.

(i) The Ecclesiastical History*, or* Chronicle*, of Pseudo-Zachariah, 569 C.E.*

Almost directly contemporary with John's *Lives* is the first major work of "orthodox" ecclesiastical history in Syriac, by an unknown author.[86] Of all the works listed here, this one provides the fullest picture of the nature of Syriac literary activity: the absorption of already-existing Greek texts; original composition in Syriac; and the copying of the resultant text in a contemporary codex. Of this major historical work, in twelve books, books 1 and 2 are original, while books 3 to 6 represent a translation or adaptation, of the "orthodox" *Ecclesiastical History* of Zachariah, later bishop of Mytilene, covering the period 451–91 C.E., and written in Greek in 495/6 C.E. As will be seen below, it is very relevant that Zachariah was not a native of Mytilene, where he subsequently became bishop, but of Gaza in Palestine, where there was in his time a powerful tradition of "orthodox" writing in Greek, all of which now survives only in Syriac translation.[87] The anonymous author, or adapter, twice mentions as his terminal date the Seleucid year 880, 569 C.E. (1.1 and 3). Continuing Zachariah's work beyond 491 C.E. and the death of the Emperor Zeno, Ps.-Zachariah put together a major historical work in Syriac, stretching into the reign of Justin II (565–78 C.E.), of which the last few books are very incompletely preserved. This is an important source for the period for various reasons, one of which is his extensive quotation of original documents. Without attempting to give a complete account of this aspect here, it will be relevant to stress that the vast majority of these quoted documents had originally been written in Greek (whether Ps.-Zachariah found pre-existing Syriac translations, or did the work himself, is not clear). In some cases there is room for doubt about the original language; but not

86. For the text and Latin translation see E. W. Brooks, ed., *Historia Ecclesiastica Zachariae Rhetori vulgo adscripta*, CSCO 83–84 Scriptores Syri, ser. 6.3.5 (1919), and 6.3.6 (1921), Syriac text; Latin translation in CSCO 87 Scriptores Syri 41 (1924). See now the masterly introduction, translation and commentary by G. Greatrex, R. R. Phenix and C. B. Horn, *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor: Church and War in Late Antiquity*, Translated Texts for Historians 55 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011). Given the coverage of all the relevant questions in this work, the treatment here will be summary.

87. For a detailed exposition of what is known about Zachariah and his works, see Greatrex et al., *Chronicle*, 3–31, and now Destephen (n. 71 above), s.v. "Zachariah" 12 (960–73).

as regards some of the content of Book 9: for instance, correspondence between Severus of Antioch and Julian of Halicarnassus (ch. 9–13); and addresses to Justinian from a group of "orthodox" bishops (ch. 15), and from the exiled Severus (ch. 16).

As mentioned above, this work is also representative of the Syriac tradition as regards its manuscript basis, in that the earliest and most important witness to the text is a codex in the British Library, in which no exact date is given, but which Wright dated to around 600 C.E.: "written in a fine, regular Estrangela of the end of the VIth or the beginning of the VIIth cent."[88] On that basis, the codex, apparently devoted entirely to the work of Ps.-Zachariah, was copied less than half a century after the author completed the text.

(j) Sixth-century(?) Syriac Translations of "Orthodox" Works by Writers from Palestine

The discussion must at this point be tentative. All the works considered in this section were originally written in Greek, and are preserved only in Syriac translation. But none of the codices containing these translations are dated as early as the sixth or early seventh century. So the argument that we should nonetheless accept that translation will have taken place in this period of intense historical and biographical activity in Syriac can be no more than circumstantial.

As has been seen, the *Ecclesiastical History* of Zachariah had been reproduced, with variations, as part of a Syriac historical work written in the 560s. So it is not unreasonable to suggest that the Syriac translation of Zachariah's biography of the most prominent figure in "orthodox" history, Severus of Antioch, itself written in Greek soon after Severus's election as Patriarch in 512 C.E., may also have been made around the middle of the sixth century.[89] Similarly, and from comparable manuscript evidence, we have Syriac texts, or fragments, of three other works by Zachariah: *Lives* of the monk Isaiah and of Peter the Iberian, and a narrative on the death of Theodosius, who had been briefly the "orthodox" bishop of Jerusalem in the 450s.[90]

Peter the Iberian had been the "orthodox" bishop of Zachariah's home

88. BL Add. 17202 (Wright 3:1046–61, no. 919).

89. For the Syriac text, known primarily from an eighth-century codex, see M.-A. Kugener, ed., *Vie de Sévère par Zacharie le Scholastique*, PO 2.1:5–115; see now also L. Ambjörn, *The Life of Severus by Zachariah of Mytilene* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2008), with text and English translation, but minimal commentary.

90. Brooks, *Vitae* (n. 56 above), 3–27 (Syriac texts); 3–19 (Latin translations).

town, Maiuma near Gaza, and it is natural to consider the fragmentary evidence for a biography of him by Zachariah along with the substantial biography preserved in Syriac, by John Rufus, or John of Maiuma; and this biography in its turn is closely linked to John's other work, the *Plerophoriae*, offering vivid representations of episodes from "orthodox" history in the fifth century.[91] This too was written in Greek, and is preserved only in Syriac. These works, and the wider context of "orthodox" asceticism in Palestine in the fifth century, have recently been discussed in great detail by C. B. Horn.[92] So it will be enough to indicate that, while the text of the *Plerophoriae* is known from Syriac manuscripts of the tenth and eleventh centuries, a number of chapters appear, essentially verbatim, in the *Chronicle of Zuqnin* (Pseudo-Dionysius) completed in about 775 C.E., and may well have been quoted from the *Ecclesiastical History* of John of Ephesus (see below). But even if so, it cannot be certain that John had used an already-existing Syriac version of the *Plerophoriae*, rather than translating the Greek text himself.

In short, while there is a strong possibility that some or all of these works were already available in Syriac translation by the second half of the sixth century, there is as yet no decisive proof. On a longer perspective, however, it is noteworthy that all the Greek originals are lost, and that all these works, coming from a context, namely the coastal area of Palestine, where Syriac had not been spoken, were to be absorbed into the collective history of "orthodoxy" as preserved in Syriac.

(k) Codex of 569 C.E. Including Philoxenus's Letter to the Monks of Senun *and Three Theological Treatises by Him*

This codex, of 190 leaves, is recorded on fol. 139a as having been written in Seleucid year 880, 569 C.E., "in the village of Sarmin (ܣܪܡܝܢ ܕܥܠܡܐ) for the holy monastery of Mar Iochanan of Nerab (ܢܝܪܒ)"; see also (e) above. Archimandrites and other clergy of the monastery are listed, and the larger body of the monks is mentioned as having contributed to the production of the book "for the profit of their lives" (ܠܚܠܨ ܢܦܫܬܗܘܢ ܕܟܠܗܘܢ).

91. For the *Life* of Peter see, R. Raabe, *Ein Charakterbild zur Kirchen- und Sittengeschichte des fünften Jahrhunderts. Syrische Übersetzung einer um das Jahr 500 verfassten griechischen Biographie* (Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1895). See now the text and translation by C. B. Horn and R. R. Phenix, *John Rufus: The* Lives *of Peter the Iberian, Theodosius of Jerusalem and the Monk Romanus* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008). For the *Plerophoriae*, see F. Nau, *Jean Rufus, Évêque de Maïouma*, PO 8.1, with text and French translation.

92. C. B. Horn, *Ascetism and Christological Controversy in Fifth-Century Palestine: the Career of Peter the Iberian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Anyone who reads the book is asked to pray for them, and for the deacon Theodore "who corrected (it)" (ܕ̈ܬܫܡ) and for the deacon Thomas "the easterner" (ܕ̈ܡܕܢܚܐ). Philoxenus's *Letter to the Monks of Senun* and three treatises of his directed against "two-nature" Christological doctrines appear on fol. 35b–107b.[93]

(l) Codex of 569 C.E. with Cathedral Homilies *31–59 of Severus of Antioch*

This is another clear proof, see (c) above, that the *Cathedral Homilies* circulated in a form in which they were numbered in sequence, and in a sixth-century translation which may be that of Paul of Callinicum. It is dated to Seleucid year 880 and year 617 of Antioch, 569 C.E.[94]

(m) Codex Copied in an "Orthodox" Monastery near Palmyra Between 542 and 578 C.E.

This codex was copied in an unidentified location (ܒ̈ܝܬ ܐܚܕ) near Palmyra (ܬܕܡܘܪ), and is written "in a good regular Estrangela hand of the sixth century" (Wright).[95] Its contents, Syriac versions of some of John Chrysostom's commentaries on Matthew, are not specifically "orthodox," and no precise date is given. But its colophon is of great historical importance in identifying the time of writing as "in the days of the holy and devout bishops, Mar Jacob and Mar Theodore"—namely the first two bishops to be consecrated, in 542 C.E., with the aim of fostering "orthodoxy" by the ordination of clergy. As John of Ephesus records in *Life* 50, this step was taken at the request of the "Ghassanid" king Arethas. It is therefore very significant that this codex refers not only to Jacob and Theodore but to "King Abokarib" (ܡܠܟܐ ܐܒܓܪܒ), who was almost certainly Arethas's brother. The date must be before Jacob's death in 578 C.E. The clear implication that there was in this period a monastery near Palmyra which both was "orthodox" and used Syriac for copying texts is of real significance; see also (q) below.

93. BL Add. 14597 (Wright 2:648–50, no. 730); Hatch, no. 30. Nerab and Sarmin are both located in the Limestone Massif, southwest of Chalcis. See G. Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du Nord* 3 (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste, 1958), 104.

94. BL Add. 14599 (Wright 2:546–48, no. 686); not included in Hatch.

95. BL Add. 14559 (Wright 2:468–69, no. 585). See now in more detail F. Millar, "A Syriac *Codex* from near Palmyra and the 'Ghassanid' Abokarib," *Hugoye* 15.1 (2013): in press.

(n) Codex of 581 C.E. with Theological Treatises by Philoxenus

This codex of 136 leaves begins with a note identifying the author, Xenaias (ܟܣܢܝܐ) or Philoxenus, bishop of Mabbug/Hierapolis (see above), and his subject, the incarnation; it ends with a brief colophon which does not identify the scribe or the context where copying took place, but dates it by Seleucid year 892, 581 C.E.[96]

(o) Codex of (probably) 588 C.E. with Two Treatises by Severus of Antioch against Julian of Halicarnassus

These treatises, of which the first is preceded by a fragment of an introductory letter by Severus, are again translations of Greek originals, and again it is possible that the translator had been Paul of Callinicum. The colophon is incomplete, but a note in a later hand on fol. 127 gives the date as 899, 588 C.E. If the date is thus not absolutely certain, the Estrangela script of the main text is sixth-century.[97]

(p) The Ecclesiastical History *of John of Ephesus*

In this context it will not be necessary to summarize the evidence for the first two parts of the *History*. What is relevant is the surviving third part, covering events from 571 C.E. to 588 C.E.[98] In this instance we have no text deriving from the pre-Islamic period. But a text of all six books, with substantial gaps, is provided by a codex of the later seventh century in the British Library, which was thus copied only about a century after the author's death.[99]

In providing a detailed account of the 570s and 580s, even if in a sometimes erratic manner, not preserving a continuous chronological sequence, and returning more than once to the same event, the *History* is prime first-hand testimony to the vicissitudes of the "orthodox" experience. As

96. *Vat.* no. 138 (218–21); Hatch, no. 32.

97. BL Add. 12158 (Wright 2:555–57, no. 690); not in Hatch.

98. John of Ephesus, *HE* (ed. and Latin trans. Brooks, *Iohannis Ephesini Historiae Ecclesiasticae Pars Tertia*, CSCO 105–6 Scriptores Syri 3.3 [1935–36]). The English translation by R. Payne Smith, *The Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History of John Bishop of Ephesus* (London: Oxford University Press, 1860), is confusing to use. There is no more recent translation into a modern language or commentary. See J. J. van Ginkel, *John of Ephesus: A Monophysite Historian in Sixth-Century Byzantium* (Diss. Groningen, 1995). For detailed biographical evidence see now Destephen (n. 71 above).

99. BL Add. 14640 (Wright 3:1061–62, no. 920). It was apparently written by the same scribe as 14647 (Wright 3:1094–2000, no. 945), containing the *Lives of the Eastern Saints* (n. 85 above), which was copied in Seleucid year 999, 688 C.E.

with John's *Lives*, of two decades earlier, the choice to compose the text in Syriac, after what was by now half a century of residence in Constantinople, is of obvious significance.

(q) A Dossier of "Orthodox," or Monophysite, Documents Compiled in the Late Sixth Century

This very remarkable set of documents comes from a single codex, and is perhaps the most striking example of the absorption into a Syriac framework of theological discourses, letters, and other documents originally written in Greek.[100] The colophon is unfortunately damaged, and if the date of copying was originally given, it has not survived, and nor has any indication of the place. The script indicates that it belongs in the late sixth or early seventh century.

This collection of 45 documents, of central importance to the history of the "orthodox" from the 530s to the 580s, has never been translated into any modern language, and has never received any detailed commentary. Fortunately, there is a clear and helpful analysis of it by A. van Roey and P. Allen,[101] whose numbering will be followed here. In broad outline, the collection is in chronological order, and a central part in it is played by letters and theological discourses of Theodosius, Patriarch of Alexandria in 536 to 566 C.E. These overlap with a large group centred on debates over the consecration of Paul of Beth Ukkame as "orthodox" Patriarch of Antioch in 564 C.E., and the latter in turn with documents about the Tritheist controversy which seems to have arisen in 567–69 C.E. Finally, out of chronological sequence with each other, come two pairs of documents from some years later: a long theological treatise and a letter, by a monk named Sergius, both dating to 580 C.E.; and then letters between Theodore, Patriarch of Alexandria, and Paul of Antioch, of 575 C.E.

The importance of this major collection will be clear; but in this context the focus will be entirely on what it shows about the respective use of Greek and Syriac among the "orthodox." Firstly, the vast majority of the documents, being inter-regional communications on matters of theology or church discipline, will certainly have been written originally in Greek. This is explicitly stated only in one case, however, in a note which

100. BL Add. 14602 (Wright 2:701–15, no. 754). Edited with Latin translation by J.-B. Chabot, *Documenta ad Origines Monophysitarum illustrandas* (CSCO 17 and 103 Scriptores Syri 17 and 37, 1933, repr. 1962).

101. A. van Roey, P. Allen, *Monophysite Texts of the Sixth Century* (Leuven: Peeters, 1994), 267–303.

precedes the text of the *Theological Discourse* delivered in Constantinople by Theodosius of Alexandria in about 560 C.E.:[102]

> This Discourse (ܡܐܡܪܐ) has been translated and interpreted (ܐܬܦܫܩ ܘܐܬܦܫܪ) from Greek into Syriac, as far as has been possible, word for word, without variations, so that it should be made clear not only in the sense alone, but (with) the expressions corresponding to the expressions in Greek, so that in quantity nothing has been added and nor has one sign (ܣܝܡܢܐ) been deducted, provided that the limitations of the language have not prevented this.

The fact that a note of this sort appears here, in regard to a *Discourse* delivered orally in Greek in Constantinople, strongly suggests that this translation had been made at the time, or near it, and was already to hand when the dossier was compiled. Elsewhere, in almost every instance, we have to assume that the original had been in Greek, without knowing whether translation had been carried out already, or only by the anonymous compiler of the dossier. It is perhaps worth emphasizing that this assumption should apply also to no. 23, a letter from the "Ghassanid" phylarch, Arethas, to Jacob Baradaeus.[103] The important role in the evolution of the "orthodox" church played by Arethas and his son Mundhir, see also (m) above, will have been mediated through the use of Greek.

If, as it seems, all of the documents themselves had originally been written in Greek, there is much less certainty as regards the long lists of subscriptions by individual monks which follow some of them. The relevant letters derive from two different areas: those from northern Syria, on the one hand, and one from Arabia (and part of Phoenicia Libanensis) on the other. The north-Syrian ones provide a vivid picture, analyzed by Ernst Honigmann, of the distribution of "orthodox" monasteries in this region, and of their Archimandrites.[104] But, while it is perfectly feasible that some, and perhaps all, may have attached their subscriptions in Syriac, even where the main text was in Greek, the original language is never explicitly indicated.[105]

102. Chabot, Syriac text, 40; Latin trans., 26. Van Roey and Allen, no. 5 (who also print and translate into Latin a text from a different manuscript, 148–251).

103. Chabot, Syriac text, 143–44; Latin trans., 100. Van Roey and Allen, no. 23.

104. See E. Honigmann, "Nordsyrische Klöster in vorarabischer Zeit," *Zeitschrift für Semitistik* 1 (1922): 15–33, with map on 33.

105. The documents from N. Syria with lists of subscriptions can be found in Chabot, 125–28 (Syr.)/87–89 (Latin); 128–30/89–91; 161–65/112–15 (45 subscriptions)—note that no. 17, Lazarus, is described as "Greek" (ܝܘܢܝ), but the implications for the language in which he subscribed are unclear; 166–72/116–20 (58 subscriptions); 181–85/126–28 (21 names).

The situation is quite different with the letter of 569 or 570 C.E. in which 137 Archimandrites and other monks, who describe themselves both as "orthodox" and as coming from the province of Arabia, reply to a group of bishops in Constantinople.[106] In this case, of the 137 persons who subscribe, only 20 describe themselves as having done so in Greek (ܒܝܘܢܐ ܒܟܬܒ). The full significance of this list of names of monks and their monasteries has been brought out recently by Robert Hoyland, who demonstrates, first, that in reality the monasteries concerned were not confined to the Roman province of Arabia, but included a significant number from around Damascus, in the province of Phoenicia Libanensis, and a couple from even further north in the same province, towards Palmyra.[107] Second, he argues convincingly that the use of Syriac for their handwritten subscriptions by the vast majority of these monks is a function of the adoption and spread of Syriac as a language of Christian culture. We thus gain a picture of "orthodox" monasteries spread across the northern part of the province of Arabia and the southern and central part of that of Phoenicia Libanensis, areas in which we would not naturally suppose that Syriac, as opposed to some other branch of Aramaic (which cannot as yet be identified), was the normal language of the lay population; see also (m) above. The distribution-maps provided by Hoyland thus offer a close parallel to that from northern Syria.

As was mentioned above, the dossier of "orthodox" documents concludes with one pair dating to 580 C.E. and another to 575 C.E., of which the former exchange, between Theodore of Alexandria and Paul of Antioch, and probably the other also, must have been written in Greek. The use of Greek was still normal among the "orthodox," as it was among the predominant Chalcedonians. But what was significant in this case was that some unknown compiler, who identifies neither himself not his motivation, first put together this substantial list of 45 documents, which would eventually fill 127 double-sided leaves; then (in at least one case) deployed an existing Syriac translation; then (it would seem) translated all the rest

106. Chabot, Syriac text, 209–24; Latin, 145–56; see van Roey and Allen, 290, no. 41. French translation by M. Lamy, "Profession de foi addressée par les Abbés d'Arabie à Jacques Baradée," *Actes du XIe Congrès des Orientalistes, Section sémitique* (Paris: 1898), 117–37; English translation, of the subscriptions only, by F. Millar, "Christian Monasticism in Roman Arabia at the Birth of Mahomet," *Semitica et Classica* 2 (2009): 97–115, on 109–13.

107. R. Hoyland, "Late Roman Provincia Arabia, Monophysite Monks and Arab Tribes: A Problem of Centre and Periphery," *Semitica et Classica* 2 (2009): 117–33, with the maps on 122–24.

himself; and finally arranged the dossier in order. This process cannot have been complete before 580 C.E., thus only a few decades, at the most, before the surviving copy was made.

(r) Syriac Verse Discourse by Peter of Callinicum, "Orthodox" Patriarch of Antioch in 580/81–591 C.E.

Originating from the same small town on the Euphrates as John of Tela, Peter was bilingual in Greek and Syriac—"eloquent and learned, versed in both languages," as Michael the Syrian records.[108] All of his known works are preserved only in Syriac codices, but as regards his letters and polemical treatises there is every reason to think that they had been written originally in Greek. The only known work of his which seems clearly to be an exception, and to have been composed in Syriac, is the 174-line verse discourse (ܡܐܡܪܐ) on the crucifixion which is preserved in a codex which seems to belong to the late sixth century. This text, which may even have been copied in the lifetime of the author, is attributed to him by name (ܡܐܡܪ ܚܠܢܐ ܡܠܛܝܣ).[109]

(s) Codex of 603 C.E. with Letters and Prose Discourses of Jacob of Sarug

This *codex* contains 34 letters from or to Jacob, followed by six homilies of his.[110] At the end of the collection of letters (fol. 104a) the scribe indicates that the original total of "select" ([ܫ]ܓܝܪ) letters of Jacob copied here had been 41. The same total is given in the colophon (fol. 135b), along with an indication that the codex also contains six homilies (ܫܬ ܡܐܡܪܐ ܓܝܪ ܐܬ). A later note (fol. 136b) asks for remembrance from the Trinity for "Joseph, a sinner from the city of Dara who wrote this book by the sustenance(?) of God and the labours of his hands in the desert of Scete in Egypt."

This is clearly a very different example of the "orthodox" tradition as expressed in Syriac, being a volume of original works that had been written in Syriac by a single author—and was later copied by a Syriac scribe in a monastery in Egypt.

108. Michael the Syrian 10.18 (ed. Chabot 4.371; trans. 2.348). This entry depends entirely on R. Y. Ebied, A. van Roey and L. R Wickham, *Peter of Callinicum: Anti-Tritheist Dossier* (Leuven: Departemente Orientalistik, 1981).

109. BL Add. 14591 (Wright 2:669–73, no. 740), fol. 69b. Published and translated by R. E. Ebied, L. R. Wickham, "The Discourse of Mar Peter Callinicus," *JTS* n.s. 26 (1975): 23–37.

110. BL Add. 14587 (Wright 2:517–24, no. 772); Hatch, no. 37.

(t) Hymns of Severus of Antioch and Others Translated by Paul of Edessa in the Early Decades of the Seventh Century

The evidence for this extensive work of translation comes not from a contemporary codex, but from one written in Seleucid year 986, 675 C.E., apparently an autograph copy by the famous scholar, Jacob of Edessa, himself, in which a long note (fol. 75a) records the circumstances under which translation had been undertaken by Paul of Edessa.[111]

In this note Jacob lists the names of Severus and other authors, and then says that their works had been "translated from the Greek tongue into the Edessene, that is the Syrian, language (ܡܠܫܢ ܝܘܢܝܐ ܠܫܢ ܐܬܝܘܦܝܐ ܐܝܬ ܠܫܢ ܣܘܪܝܝܐ ܐܘ ܠܫܢ ܐܘܪܗܝܐ)" by Paul, bishop of Edessa, when he had been on the island of Cyprus in flight from the Persians. The date could be any time between the Persian advance of about 604 C.E. onwards and Heraclius's victory in 628 C.E.[112]

This codex contains many other items, but we may pass over these, as well as Jacob's discussion of the principles of translation, while noting that he attributes to Paul of Edessa the translation of 365 hymns in all, of which 295 were by Severus. This process, once again conducted outside the Syriac-speaking area, represents the opposite step to that involved in the copying of earlier works originally written in Syriac, namely the absorption into Syriac of important elements of the "orthodox" literary heritage in Greek.

(u) Syriac Life *of Jacob Baradaeus Claiming to Be by John of Ephesus*

If this *Life*, while clearly not the work of John of Ephesus himself, was written in about 600 C.E., then it must be regarded as one of the major examples of "orthodox" historical or biographical writing from the pre-Islamic period. John of Ephesus himself in his *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, written in the late 560s, see (h) above, had included as *Life* 49 a *Life* of Jacob, and as *Life* 50 a joint biography of the two effective founders of a separate "orthodox" church, Jacob and Theodore, ordained in 542 C.E. These works take a mere eight and six pages respectively in the edition

111. BL Add. 17134 (Wright 1:330–39, no. 321); not in Hatch. For Jacob of Edessa see most recently B. ter Haar Romeny (ed.), *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture of His Day* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), and G. A. Kiraz (ed.), *Studies in Jacob of Edessa* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010).

112. See the excellent account by G. Greatrex and S. N. C. Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars 2: AD 363–630* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), ch. 13–14.

by E. W. Brooks.[113] This other Syriac *Life*, however, is a work on a quite different scale, occupying some forty pages.[114]

A grandiose introductory paragraph records that this "story of the habits of life" (ܥܡܪܐ ܕܚܝܐ ܕܡܬܝܒ) of Jacob was written by the pious John of Asia (ܡܐܡܪ ܝܘܚܢܢ ܐܣܝܐ ܕܚܝܐ); and John himself appears, described in what seem to be rather too circumstantial terms, among the bishops whom Jacob ordained: "me, the sinful John the Syrian, the converter of the pagans, and author of the *Ecclesiastical History* (ܕܬܫܥܝܬܐ ܕܡܬܝܒ)."[115] Whether we should classify this *Life* as history or as devotional fiction (which remains to be determined, since it has not been the subject of a detailed analysis more recent than 1882),[116] it is unquestionably a major example of "orthodox" narrative, with birth and early years, and then details of travel and ordination, miracles and persecution, and so would deserve study as a prime example of biographical literature. There does not seem to be any obvious reason why this text has to be dated later than the pre-Islamic period, though the earliest manuscript seems to belong to the late-eighth century.[117] That it should be read as a powerful expression of "orthodox" history and identity is beyond question. What remains unclear is precisely when it was composed and attributed to John of Ephesus.

CONCLUSION

On any interpretation, the material summarily collected above, and certainly incomplete, will surely be sufficient to show that the Syriac language played a very important part in the creation of a sectarian, and then separatist, collective history of the "orthodox," and in the establishment of a specifically "orthodox" canon of literature, in the form of letters, homilies, biographies, and ecclesiastical histories. Within that context, effort was repeatedly devoted to the translation, or adaptation, of "orthodox" works from Greek into Syriac. Greek of course continued to be used in

113. John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints* (ed. Brooks, PO 29:153 [499]–158 [504]).

114. PO 19:228 [574]–268 [614].

115. PO 29:242 [588].

116. H. G. Kleyn, *Jacobus Baradaeus, de Stichter der Syrische Monophysietische Kirche* (Leiden: 1882). *Non vidi*. See however D. D. Bundy, "Jacob Baradaeus: The State of Research, a Review of Sources and a New Approach," *Muséon* 91 (1978): 45–86, on 71–72.

117. E. Sachau, *Verzeichniss der Syrischen Handschriften der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin* (Berlin: Asher, 1899), no. 26 (94–101, see esp. 98 and 100). This codex is helpfully quoted as "Sachau 321."

the public life of this religious community, as the latest items in the dossier of "orthodox" documents, see (q) above, clearly show. In any case, the translation of one copy of a Greek work, and its then being copied into one Syriac codex, could have had no immediate effect on its continued circulation in Greek.

If we return to the supposition of a possible "nationalist" element in the linguistic history of the "orthodox" community, there seems to be as yet no sign of any call for the rejection of Greek as the language of the hitherto dominant culture and of the Imperial power, in favor of insistence on the use of Syriac, as the distinctive language of this regional community. On the contrary, the act of translation was itself a sign of the significance attached to a whole series of works in Greek, and we perhaps need not insist on any explanation beyond the need to make them available to a Syriac-speaking public. It is noteworthy that the "Second Syndoktikon" of the Eastern bishops, of 568 C.E. records with approval the fact that Jacob Baradaeus had *prevented* the translation of a heretical Tritheist treatise into Syriac.[118]

There was nonetheless something very deliberate and significant in the process of building up, both by the continued copying of canonical "orthodox" works originally written in Syriac, and by the translation (and then copying) of such works from Greek. There is some parallel, though a very limited one, within the "Nestorian" church of the East, as it was in this period, in that Nestorius's own personal testament, *The Book of Heraclides*, was translated from Greek into Syriac in 539/40 C.E.[119] There was also a distinctive "Nestorian" historiographical tradition in Syriac, as shown for instance by the *Ecclesiastical History* and *Cause of the Foundation of the Schools*, both probably by the same Barhadbeshabba.[120] But, as regards its public language, the situation of this church was quite different, in that it did not live in constant contact, either with the Greek-speaking "orthodox" church of Alexandria and Egypt, or with Greek-speaking Chalcedonians, or with Constantinople.

What we cannot grasp is the communal linguistic history of the lay "orthodox" congregations: for instance, how far, where and for how long

118. Chabot, *Documenta*, (n. 100 above), Syriac text, 167; Latin trans., 117: ܥܕܡ ܡܫܘܚܬܐ ܕܐܬܬܝܗܒ ܠܗ ܒܟܬܒ ܚܕ. Van Roey and Allen (n. 101 above), no. 27.

119. See S. Brock, "The Christology of the Church of the East in the Synods of the Fifth to Early Seventh Centuries," in Brock, *Studies in Syriac Christianity* (Aldershot, UK: Variorum, 1992), no. 12, on 126–27.

120. See most conveniently A. H. Becker, *Sources for the Study of the School of Nisibis,* Translated Texts for Historians 50 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008).

they remained, in at least some degree, bilingual in Greek and Syriac; or when it became normal for them to be addressed, in homilies or in Bible readings, only in Syriac. We certainly cannot deny that there were Greek-speakers among the "orthodox," just as we have concrete evidence of Syriac-speaking Chalcedonian monks or bishops who appear in the conflicts of 518/19 and 536 C.E. Among the documents quoted in 536 C.E. at the Synod of Constantinople, we find that in 519 C.E. monks from the territory of Apamea had addressed a petition against both Severus of Antioch (now in flight in Egypt) and their own "orthodox" metropolitan, Peter. The petition concludes with 18 subscriptions written in Greek from presbyters, deacons and archimandrites, which are followed by a note saying: "There are also, in the language of the *Suroi*, many and innumerable subscriptions of monks" (εἰσὶ δὲ καὶ τῇ τῶν Σύρων γλώττῃ πολλαὶ καὶ ἄπειροι μοναχῶν ὑπογραφαί). There seems to be a clear distinction of status, in that these non-ordained monks subscribed in Syriac—but to a strongly Chalcedonian document.[121]

Much the same picture appears at the Synod of Constantinople itself, in 536 C.E. In the list of subscriptions at the end of the fourth session the scribe twice records "subscriptions in Syriac letters," without stating how many there were; while at the end of the fifth session the list includes references to two, and then to one more, "subscriptions of *Suroi*." It is noteworthy also that in the subscriptions in a document addressed to Pope Agapetus by Chalcedonian bishops resident in Constantinople, two of them, Ioannes of Gabbula in Syria I and Dauithos of Circesium in Euphratensis, are recorded as stating "I have subscribed in Syriac" (ὑπέγραψα Συριστί).[122] Syriac-speaking bishops and monks thus played a part, though a minor one, on the Chalcedonian side also in the conflicts of 519 and 536 C.E.

No one would argue, in any case, that there was a clear linguistic division between the two opposed Christological positions, and eventually two separate churches. But, while ample evidence, explored above, shows the continuing role of Greek on the "orthodox" side, there is a real and fundamental contrast as regards the evolution of the "orthodox" literary tradition. For there seems to be no evidence from the Chalcedonian side

121. Schwartz, *ACO* 3 (n. 69 above), para. 36 (110). For the context and the structure of the dossier in which this petition appears, see F. Millar, "Un dossier d'accusation déposé auprès du *Praeses* de Syrie Seconde pour transmission à Justin Ier," *AT* 18 (2010): 431–41.

122. Schwartz, *ACO* 3, para. 131.31 and 68 (184–85), on Session 4; para. 40.40–41 and 63 (116–17) on Session 5; para. 69.3 and 7 (150) for the petition. See F. Millar, "Linguistic Coexistence in Constantinople: Greek and Latin (and Syriac) in the Acts of the Synod of 536 C.E.," *JRS* 99 (2009): 92–103, on 101.

in the later pre-Islamic period of any ongoing tradition of literary composition in Syriac, or any representations of their history written in Syriac.

This contrast must therefore be significant, and P. Maraval in his excellent survey of the ecclesiastical history of the Near East in this period is wholly correct to conclude, on the one hand, that it is not a question of a "national church;" but that, on the other hand, there is an unmistakable evolution by which this church came to express its identity by limiting, the use of Greek in favor of Syriac.[123] He is, however, referring here to the early Islamic period, and speaks of the "Melkite" (Chalcedonian) church on the one hand, and the "Jacobite" or "orthodox" one on the other.

This paper, however, has been designed precisely to return to the pre-Islamic period, and to ask in concrete detail what evidence we have for the respective use of Greek and of Syriac among the "orthodox" from the later fifth century to the early seventh, when a separate church was in the early stages of the process of formation. Its conclusion is that we cannot yet write a social history of Greek and Syriac in the Near East, or gain any clear conception of how these languages were deployed by the "orthodox," or indeed by the Chalcedonians, as regards the relations of either church to their lay congregations. But what we can see with absolute clarity, as is made possible by a mass of concrete evidence, is, first, the progressive transfer into Syriac of "orthodox" works originally expressed in Greek; and, second, the creation in Syriac of a distinct historical tradition of the experiences of the "orthodox" and their sufferings at the hands of their opponents.

The historical significance of this is emphasized all the more strongly by the apparent absence of comparably partisan writing from within the Chalcedonian tradition. The nearest approximation is offered by the *Chronicle of Edessa*, which is notable as representing a narrative, or year-by-year record of events, concluding in 540 C.E. with the Persian invasion, and is both written in Syriac and expresses approval of Justinian from a Chalcedonian standpoint. But it covers secular events as well as episodes in church history, and is not marked by any strongly partisan approach.[124] Then, from the later sixth century, we have the clearly Chalcedonian *Ecclesiastical History* of Evagrius, a native of Epiphania (Hama) who lived in

123. P. Maraval, "L'échec en Orient. Le développement des Églises dissidentes dans l'Empire," in L. Piétri (ed.), *Les Églises d'Orient et d'Occident* (Paris: Desclée, 1998), 458–81, on 470.

124. Edition, translation, and commentary by L. Hallier, *Untersuchungen über die Edessenische Chronik* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buckhandlung, 1892). For the Chronicler's theological position see Hallier, 68–83.

Antioch and wrote in Greek, completing his work in the 590s.[125] But we know of no Chalcedonian historical writing in Syriac from the last decades of the century.

As regards hagiography or biography, the brief period of "orthodox" dominance in the second decade of the century might have led to the writing of idealized accounts of bishops, clerics, or monks who suffered for their Chalcedonian views. The dossier of material exposing the tyrannical actions of Severus of Antioch and Peter of Apamea which was assembled in 518/19 C.E., and was quoted at Constantinople in 536 C.E. can give a vivid idea of what such a genre might have contained.[126] But we know of no such works, in either Greek or Syriac. We do by contrast have one major example of a saint's life written in Syria in Greek in the 590s, namely that of Symeon Stylites the Younger.[127] But neither the presence, nor challenge, of the "orthodox" nor the use of Syriac plays any part in this *Life*. The "orthodox" Patriarchs of Antioch in this period did not reside, or function, in the city.

Symeon must himself have been venerated within the Chalcedonian church, given the reverential tones of the chapter which Evagrius devotes to him, in which he also records the attachment to Symeon of Gregory, the Chalcedonian Patriarch of Antioch of 570–592 C.E.[128] Evagrius had naturally given considerable attention earlier in his narrative to the career of Severus of Antioch, and, as regards his own time, records that Gregory visited the eastern frontier zone "where the doctrines of Severus are particularly prevalent," and converted many forts, villages, monasteries, and whole tribes.[129] But he too makes no allusion to the currency of Syriac in this region. To repeat, therefore, both the extensive, detailed and concrete evidence for the use of Syriac on the "orthodox" side and the contrast with the expression of Chalcedonian identity as expressed in Greek in Syria, compel us to conclude that what we can observe here is a distinctive and significant development in the religious, linguistic and social history of the Near East.

125. See the translation and commentary by M. Whitby, n. 42 above.

126. See n. 121 above.

127. See the edition, translation and commentary by P. van den Ven, *La vie ancienne de S. Syméon Stylite le Jeune* 1–2 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1962). See now F. Millar, "The Image of a Christian Monk in Northern Syria: Symeon Stylites the Younger," in B. Sandwell, C. Harrison, and C. Humphress (eds.), *Being a Christian in Late Antiquity: A Festschrift for Gillian Clark* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), in press.

128. Evagrius, *HE* 6.23.

129. Evagrius, *HE* 3.33–34; 44; 4.4; 11; 6.22 (on Gregory, trans. Whitby).

But, finally, for any historian who is not a specialist, the most striking feature of "orthodox" religious practice in the sixth century must be the extensive evidence for the evolution of a coherent scribal tradition in Syriac, pursued in monasteries, and producing codices of which remarkable numbers survive, and of which many reveal scripts and lay-outs of great clarity and beauty. These preserve for us a vast range of texts, whether originally written in Syriac or translated from Greek (and whether as yet printed in modern editions or not). But many of them also allow us, thanks to the colophons added in their own names by the scribes, to go beyond reading religious texts to encountering vivid individual expressions of "orthodox" piety.

Fergus Millar is Camden Professor of Ancient History Emeritus at the University of Oxford, and a member of the Hebrew and Jewish Studies Unit at the Oriental Institute, Oxford